OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CABINET
17th JULY 2012

FUTURE ARRANGMENTS FOR CALL RECEIPT, MOBILISING AND INCIDENT MANAGEMENT FOR THE OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Report by Chief Fire Officer

Introduction

1.	The Fire Control rooms in Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS) and Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) both receive emergency calls via 999/112 and direct from alarm receiving centres and other emergency services. This is a specific statutory function identified within the Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004. Trained staff assess the call details and determine and mobilise the appropriate response using sophisticated Information Communications Technology (ICT) systems. They then support the ongoing resource needs of the incident, relaying information to responsible officers and partner agencies and support the incident as required. In between calls they manage staffing and availability issues, undertake wider administrative actions and perform out of hours contact functions.

2.	In December 2003 the government announced a mandatory project to replace all local control rooms with an interlinked network of regional control centres. This project, known as FiReControl, was terminated in December 2010.

3.	Oxfordshire officers were given discretion to engage fully to secure available benefits[1], despite OCC formal opposition to FiReControl. Meanwhile, with OCC funding, critical items of Fire Control ICT infrastructure were replaced[2]. However, the legacy core mobilising system remains unchanged and with increasing age will eventually become unsupportable.

4.	Royal Berkshire Fire Authority supported the FiReControl project and, whilst some aspects of fire control systems have been updated, the legacy core mobilising system still requires urgent replacement.

5.	A separate national mandatory programme called FireLink, replaced the previous analogue radio system with a secure digital system (Airwave) allowing interoperability with other emergency services. The provision of Airwave allows technical advancement, especially when deploying new core mobilising systems. This includes the move of day to day radio traffic from voice to data transmissions allowing automation of routine messages and reduced staff workload.

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[1] This resulted in all station end equipment being replaced and Mobile Data Terminals being fitted to fire appliances
[2] This included the main telephony based ICT system in the control room

6.   In 2011 the government announced further one off grant funding[3] for securing "resilience and efficiency" improvements in all English Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs), recognising that the FiReControl Programme had resulted in many FRSs having increasingly antiquated control room systems requiring urgent replacement.

7.   The three Thames Valley Fire Authorities[4] began working together on a joint programme to create a single joint control. OCC Cabinet and Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) approved this approach in September 2011. Buckinghamshire chose to progress alternative arrangements with Cambridgeshire and Suffolk.

8.   RBFA in their decision gave discretion to proceed with only two Authorities. In a delegated decision in February 2012, the OCC Cabinet Member for Safer and Stronger Communities approved progressing with the programme with Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire only.

9.   In November 2011 Oxfordshire and Berkshire submitted a joint bid to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and in March 2012 secured a total of £3.6M to invest in the programme.

10.   OCC Cabinet and RBFA are now in a position to consider the proposal to create a single joint control room. The success of the grant bid provides sufficient capital and revenue funding to deliver the entire programme and provides for all necessary Information Communications Technology (ICT) equipment, premises costs and programme staffing implications.

11.   The outline business case identifies that after programme delivery, that in "steady state" the joint fire control will not only deliver revenue savings but provides for all future renewals funding for the life of the programme. Endorsement of the proposal will remove the requirement for any anticipated, future fire control capital funding from both the OCC and the RBFA during the life of the proposal and will create a renewals fund for any subsequent replacement system required at the end of the joint arrangements.

Exempt Information

12.   None

Programme Proposal

13.   Subject to OCC Cabinet approval the programme will, by April 2014, deliver a single joint control room with a fully functional secondary control room and

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[3] Up to £1.8M per authority
[4] Oxfordshire County Council, Royal Berkshire Fire Authority and Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority

"remote buddy[5]" Fire and Rescue Service. Together this is called the Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) programme. In the interim, the programme will deliver increased ability to offer uninterrupted service to all fire control users. This is often referred to as "resilience." In the longer term, third parties will be encouraged to receive their Control Services from the new Thames Valley Fire Control Service on an income generation basis.

14.   The proposed joint arrangement is based on a 15 year period from transfer to the single control room (2014 – 2029) to ensure maximum return on investment.

15.   The programme has three strategic aims:-

- An improved service to the public and our firefighters
- Significant resilience improvements, both addressing the urgent need to replace legacy systems and make use of the latest technology for dealing with periods of exceptional workload,[6] and;
- The delivery of financial efficiencies.

In addition the programme seeks to improve firefighter safety by the provision of further relevant and timely information to staff.

16.   A "Concept of Operations" has been produced by OFRS and RBFRS Officers and approved by the Programme Sponsoring Group. It sets out:-

- Clarity at a strategic level on the over-arching concept for the TVFCS
- Details of other sources of information to underpin the over-arching concept, such as business needs, processes, & requirements, convergence products and other related documents; and
- Shows how the key elements of the design of the organisational, processes and technology contribute to the over-arching concept.

17.   This programme is by its nature technical due to the central importance of ICT in any emergency service control room. However, whilst the ICT is important; the main issues in the programme are those of change management and people. The ability, motivation and professionalism of staff are fundamental to service delivery. .

18.   The proposal is not unique. Other FRSs are also pursuing collaborative approaches. Examples include the Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Buckinghamshire programme identified above; with Suffolk transferring all call receipt and mobilising to Cambridgeshire in October 2011. The Isle of Wight FRS successfully transferred all call receipt and mobilising to Surrey FRS in

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[5] A "remote buddy" has the ability to take overflow calls from a FRS experiencing either periods of very high workload or as a fall-back if the primary fire control is unavailable for any reason. 999/112 and other emergency calls are routed automatically (overflow) to the remote buddy, they receive the call, and take mobilising actions that could either be the passing of the details back to the joint control for action or in some circumstances mobilising Oxfordshire fire crews directly.
[6] As experienced by many FRSs in July 2007 as a result of widespread flooding

March 2012. In the North West, Cumbria FRS transferred its fire control to Cheshire FRS in June 2012 as an interim position before moving into the North West fire control which will serve both these FRSs and Greater Manchester and Lancashire FRSs. The TVFCS programme will build upon the lessons learnt in these other programmes and the programme team are in active dialogue with a number of them.

19. With the exception of the North West programme, the above arrangements all operate on a provider and purchaser model. This is a notable difference when contrasted with the TVFCS proposal. Our single control will operate under joint governance arrangements ensuring that both the OCC and the RBFA have direct ownership and control over the strategic direction and performance of the joint control.

Scope of activities and operational alignment

20. All core activities currently undertaken in either control room will be part of the future joint control. Currently both control rooms undertake out of hours administrative actions duties. The joint control will continue to do this.   OFRS fire control also undertakes limited other corporate work, in particular being the mobilising function for the OCC Emergency Planning Officers and being the central link in information cascade to the OCC Chief Executive or Duty Director. These activities are envisaged to transfer to the joint control. In future it may be possible to accommodate further activities on behalf of OCC or other local authorities.

21. A dedicated Operational Alignment work stream is in place to identify operational alignment issues and create joint arrangements that meet both organisations' needs. This work stream will also address areas of concern, often put forward by some stakeholders relating to potential loss of local knowledge of current control staff. There are two main issues.

   a. Potential loss of local geographic knowledge. This proposition fails to recognise that whilst local knowledge in control rooms may occasionally be fortuitously beneficial, it is the local crews attending incidents that hold and benefit directly from local knowledge. This aspect will not change under this programme. Other authorities such as London and Strathclyde successfully provide services on a much larger geographic scale, demonstrating that local geographic knowledge is not essential to control room operations. In addition the programme will provide control room staff with additional technology to assist in identifying caller location. Whilst this is not always the location of the incident, the assistance of such systems, supplemented by professional staff, will address this issue.

   b. The second issue relates to the need to ensure that control staff are fully aware of both organisations' policies and procedures relevant to mobilising, incident management and support arrangements. The operational alignment workstream will adopt the standardised products

being created within the South East Fire and Rescue Services Operational Policies and Procedures programme[7]. This is an ongoing programme, supported by all nine South East FRSs and designed to create standardisation. Where this approach is not possible, a single joint policy between OFRS and RBFRS will whenever possible be created and adopted. On the rare occasions that this approach is not possible, ICT systems and staff professionalism allow for individual service arrangements and staff will be provided specific training in these areas. The programme goal is to minimise differing procedures where possible but also allow for individual variation where necessary to enhance firefighter safety or improved public service delivery.

Programme Mandate

22.   A programme mandate has been created and agreed at Officer and Elected Member level. This identified a number of drivers for this programme. They include:-

- The urgent need to replace aging legacy equipment which has previously not been replaced due to the former FiReControl project.
- The absolute need to reduce expenditure on future systems by working in partnership
- The need to improve our service delivery arrangements, particularly in periods of very high workload[8] via a remote buddy Fire and Rescue Service that can take calls and mobilise resources to life threatening calls. The widespread flooding in July 2007 is illustrative. The subsequent national "Pitt Review" made relevant recommendations that are being met by the programme
- The need to meet the business continuity requirements placed upon us under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- The significant and sustained reduction in incident numbers attended by both FRSs over the last 10 years has had a perverse effect, increasing the costs per call handled. This is due to the fact that individual stand-alone controls cannot reduce staffing numbers below minimum criteria due to resilience reasons. This increase now results in it being cost effective to invest in networking systems to address this effect
- The need in the longer term to ensure systems maintenance and replacement expenditure is minimised by cost sharing
- The need in the longer term to ensure that system replacement costs are factored into a "whole life cost" approach which identifies funding from efficiencies which reduces risk of financial shortfall when systems require replacement. This has the effect of removing the need for OCC

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[7] Whilst a South East initiative this has now been adopted by further FRSs and is now called the OPAP group

[8]   Sometimes known as "spate" conditions

and RBFA to allocate future capital funding to maintain the effectiveness of the control function for the foreseeable future.

23. There are a number of other benefits in progressing the proposal which are not immediately quantifiable. These include future increased operational effectiveness, and potentially efficiencies, by:-

- enhancing opportunities to adopt wider South East standardised operational procedures allowing consideration of joint training or procurement decisions due to standardisation
- the sharing of operational equipment and specialist officers between OFRS and RBFRS (both of which will improve cross border mobilising arrangements)
- potential collaboration in replacing other back office ICT systems; and
- facilitating compliance with improved ICT security standards allowing connection to the Public Services Network.

Programme Governance Arrangements

24. Programme governance arrangements have been established with a Member led Programme Sponsoring Group (PSG) with responsibility for overall strategic oversight and direction for the programme. There is a combined Services Programme Board with the responsibility for the management and delivery of the programme. The OFRS Deputy Chief Officer is the Programme Senior Responsible Owner, reporting to the PSG and chairing the Programme Board. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been agreed and signed with Member approval between both organisations. Subject to political approval to proceed, the MOU will be replaced by a legally binding partnership agreement. The arrangements ensure the interests of both Authorities are protected during the programme.

25. The Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) has a specifically arranged an additional meeting during the evening of the 17th July 2012. This meeting will take a decision on the proposal to proceed with the RBFA Headquarters move from Dee Road Reading to the identified site in Calcot West Berkshire. This decision will precede the decision on the progression of the TVFCS programme. The TVFCS programme can only proceed if the decision is taken to proceed with the Headquarters relocation. If the decision to relocate the Headquarters site is not approved by RBFA the TVFCS programme will be required to reassess the location premises strategy before making a decision to proceed. As a result, the OCC recommendations are required to be caveated on the basis of the approval of the Headquarters relocation programme.

26. In order to publically demonstrate high level political commitment to this project Cllr Paul Bryant from the RBFA is expected to address the OCC Cabinet Meeting. The Member for OCC Safer and Stronger Communities will address the RBFA meeting.

Location

27. The Programme Board delivered a work package which examined the options for the preferred location of the single joint control. This was based on a set of essential and desirable criteria and recognised the financial realities of only two Services now being party to the programme. As a result only FRS Headquarters sites are considered viable options, it no longer being financially possible to provide the joint control in a new and neutral site. Detailed reports including full assessments by the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure and a numerical assessment of the individual factors has been created.

28. The premises report identified that whilst either proposed location was capable of providing the single joint control room, the Royal Berkshire proposed HQ location in Calcot was objectively considered the better of the two options. This was mainly due to its ability to comply fully with the premises essential and desirable requirements and the detrimental consequences on accommodation provision and displacement of other functions within the OFRS HQ due to the need to expand the current control floor space if selected as the primary control.

29. The main issue in comparing options is that the current OFRS control has significant physical restrictions (it is a 1980s extension above a previous single storey fire appliance room) whereas the RBFRS option will be a purpose built room reconfigured as part of a building refurbishment programme which will become the new RBFRS Headquarters. This option has fewer restrictions and allows for later expansion if needed due to provision of control room services to other FRSs choosing to purchase a paid service.

30. On the 11th June 2012 PSG reviewed the premises location selection report which is attached as Annex 1. PSG noted the details and endorsed that Calcot should form the preferred location of the primary control and Kidlington the secondary control and that this should be put to both Authorities in their meetings on the 17th July 2012.

31. The programme also delivers arrangements for a "remote buddy" FRS which will allow calls not answered within a prescribed time to be routed (overflow) to the remote buddy for them to answer and take mobilising actions as required. This arrangement is common across the Country and particularly necessary during spate conditions or generally busy periods. Remote buddy FRSs often work on a mutual basis offering this service for each other. For this reason it is necessary for a remote buddy to be physically remote so as to be in a differing weather pattern to minimise the potential of spate conditions occurring simultaneously. Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire's existing buddies are not geographically remote. They (Gloucestershire or Hampshire FRSs respectively) also cannot mobilise on our behalf, merely being able to answer the call and then pass it back to Oxfordshire / Royal Berkshire for action. As this project will identify a remote buddy which will be able to answer and take mobilising actions as required, the current arrangements identified above can

be significantly improved which will directly improve the service to the public and enhance firefighter safety.

32.   In addition to the remote buddy the programme delivers a newly refurbished secondary control room in Oxfordshire. A non-staffed secondary control is necessary for resilience purposes and acts as a "fall back" should the primary control not be available for a prolonged time e.g. due to unplanned interruptions or planned maintenance. In this case the remote buddy provides an interim service whilst, depending on the circumstances prevailing, the staff from the primary control, if necessary relocate to the secondary control. Due to the relative proximity of Kidlington to Calcot this arrangement is considered effective.

33.   The proposal if agreed will result in a secondary control being provided within the OFRS HQ site at Kidlington located in the space used by the current control. Limited remodelling and re-cabling will be required. The area will be put to an alternative dual use post transfer into the joint control to maximise financial benefits. All costs associated with the secondary control will be met from the DCLG grant so there will be no requirement for OCC capital funding.

34.   The proposed location also allows the programme to be structured in a way in which secures maximum business continuity until the new joint entity is in operation. The new control room can be established and an extensive testing regime put in place whilst still allowing both current control rooms to continue operation. By adopting a phased approach to the programme the early resilience benefits can be delivered whilst also providing the mobilising system for the secondary control.

Consultation Arrangements

Public Consultation

35.   A 12 week full public consultation, supported by initial and subsequent press releases, has been undertaken. The consultation closed on 6th July 2012.

36.   To publicise and assist with the consultation process, the Programme Board initially circulated 200 copies of the document to staff and published the document on both Royal Berkshire and Oxfordshire websites.

37.   Press releases (tailored to each FRS) were issued to Berkshire and Oxfordshire media, plus FRS specialist media, to highlight the launch of the consultation period. These generated some but not significant amounts of coverage in the local media. Further press releases were issued to mark the mid-way point of the consultation programme and remind members of the public that there was still time to take part. The consultation programme was also publicised internally in both FRSs.

38.	The consultation process has, at the time of writing, received ninety-three responses. An oral update of any subsequent responses will be provided in the OCC Cabinet and RBFA meetings. Thirty-seven of the responses have been made through the Oxfordshire County Council consultation 'E Portal' and are anonymous and therefore these respondents cannot be specifically identified.

39.	A consultation response report identifying the concerns and management responses is attached as Annex 2.

40.	As it was considered probable that public interest in the consultation would be limited, two public engagement forums were arranged. These were hosted by Opinion Research Services[9] (ORS) and were held on the 1st May 2012 in Reading Town Hall and the 2nd May 2012 in Oxford County Council main buildings. Both Business Change Managers, who are an integral part of the Joint Programme Board, were present at both meetings.

41.	Forty-five members of the public from both Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire attended the forums. The overwhelming view was that the proposal represented the best available option and it should continue to fruition with 93% of attendees having no preference to location other than to use the best identified premises from the two available. A full copy of the ORS report is attached at Appendix A to the consultation response report attached at Annex 2.

42.	Two staff engagement forums, facilitated by Opinion Research Services, were held on Monday 18 June and Tuesday 19 June in Wallingford. Control staff from both FRSs were invited to take part in the events, with twenty-six staff electing to attend, out of a total of fifty-four eligible participants. The material from the events has been made available to those staff members who were unable to attend, along with staff members from the wider organisations.

43.	Both staff engagement events were conducted and responded by staff in a very professional manner. However, staff were understandably concerned about the location decision and the implications for them personally. The main topics of discussion centred around 'spate' conditions, increased resilience and forecast efficiencies.

44.	Staff were given 3 main criteria to summarise their views; Efficiency savings, Resilience and Desirability of the Programme. The overwhelming view is that staff are not convinced the final solution will generate efficiency savings, prove more resilient or that it is a desirable to proceed beyond stage 2 resilience to a single, joint control room. A copy of the ORS combined staff engagement report is attached at Appendix B to the consultation response report attached at Annex 2.

45.	It is important to note that the staff engagement events have been held to fully identify the views of staff and to ensure they are fully included within

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[9] A specialist consultation company having extensive experience of the Fire and Rescue Service sector

programme deliberations. The events were not formal 'consultation' events in relation to employment issues.

46.   Staff from both Control Rooms have been involved with the programme thus far with staff members attending equipment presentations, a recent communications conference and supplied with documents for the premises selection process. Regular face to face briefings continue to be undertaken with Control Room staff and a frequently answered questions section of the FRSs intranets has been set up.

Representative Body Information

47.   Two joint OFRS and RBFRS information meetings with the Fire Brigades Union have been undertaken. In addition both FRSs are communicating progress and intentions within regular liaison meetings. Both FRSs are committed to continued consultation throughout the programme and will welcome constructive engagement with representative bodies. The full legal requirements for consultation with all staff will be met.

Alternative options

48.   Previous OCC Cabinet and RBFA papers presented in September 2011 included alternative options. These included the retention of a stand-alone control, networked with other controls to create resilience for spate conditions and fall back due to systems failure or building denial (OFRS) and potential outsourcing to another FRS (RBFRS).

49.   These alternatives whilst previously discounted still provide viable alternative means of securing service improvements, increased resilience and greater saving. However, taken holistically, the TVFCS proposal offers a more effective outcome and has the benefit of providing the basis upon which further opportunities and benefits can be built. This lends it to being put forward as the preferred option.

50.   Should OCC Cabinet and RBFA not favour progression with the TVFCS partnership both individual Authorities would be required to reconsider their individual positions.

51.   In Oxfordshire the most probable current alternative would be to retain a control room, networked with other FRSs. In Royal Berkshire the most probable alternative would be to seek to outsource to another FRS. Senior Service Managers are not recommending these options as it is believed that, all in all, the TVFCS proposal offers the best option available.

52.   It is uncertain what view DCLG would take on any alterations to the stated intentions on which the grant was awarded. In either case, confirmation might be required from DCLG that the alternative proposals complied with the conditions of the grant award.

Staff, Financial and Other Implications

Staff Implications

53. Current authorised staff establishment levels in OFRS / RBFRS are 22 / 30 respectively. It is envisaged that in future, 30 staff will be required for the joint control but this is dependent on detailed staff and call modelling which is still underway. The sustained reduction over the last 10 years in incident numbers, the provision of a remote buddy and a move to extensive use of data rather than voice transmissions over the radio all reduce the need for current levels of staffing.

54. The following figures demonstrate the reduction in incident numbers in Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire over a 10 year period. The reduction is in excess of 43%. The figures also reveal that in the early 2000s RBFRS mobilised to more incidents than the current combined total.

Year	OFRS	RBFRS	Total	Total authorised FTE[10] of watch based staff
2001/02	10,466	14,400	24,866	44
2002/03	9,352	13,515	22,867	48
2003/04	7,285	14,232	21,517	48
2004/05	6,717	12,190	18,907	48
2005/06	7,152	12,098	19,250	48
2006/07	6,626	11,905	18,531	48
2007/08	6,621	11,261	17,882	48
2008/09	6,008	10,436	16,444	48
2009/10	5,533	9,554	15,087	48
2010/11	5,763	8,375	14,138	48

55. Many other existing control rooms, even prior to further modernisation and combination programmes routinely handle the number of incidents envisaged with the indicative staffing numbers expected in the TVFCS.

56. Irrespective of the chosen location, a transparent and fair selection system for the staff from both FRSs will be conducted.

57. The full organisational design process will commence following the decision to proceed. It is intended that current staff and representative bodies will be consulted on this particular aspect of the programme as appropriate.

58. Both parties have endorsed the adoption of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE) as best practice and are committed to support staff throughout the programme. Currently it is

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[10] Full-time equivalent (FTE) is a unit that indicates the workload of an employed person in a way that makes workloads comparable across various contexts.

envisaged that Royal Berkshire Fire Authority will become the employer of control staff although this is yet to be finally determined.

59.   Both FRSs are committed to their staff and, within the requirements of a fair and transparent TUPE compliant personnel process, are determined to avoid as far as possible compulsory redundancies.   It is planned for the joint control room to be fully operational by April 2014. This time period will allow a detailed staffing and human resources plan to be implemented which will facilitate an approach to maximise any identified opportunities for redeployment of control room staff.

60.   Both RBFA and OCC have Human Resources staff experienced in supporting employees through similar transitions. This experience, supplemented for Oxfordshire fire control staff in wider potential redeployment opportunities of a County Council structure, will be put to maximum effect.

Financial Implications

61.   The financial arrangements fall into two categories. These are the programme finances and the steady state financial outcomes. Both of these aspects are set out with further information within a Strategic Outline (business) Case which is available as a background document. This report summarises the main findings.

Programme

62.   Programme funding requirements have been identified. The MOU contains a schedule of indicative spending requirements which will increase in certainty as and when detailed quotes are received following procurement exercises. Current assumptions are evidenced by knowledge of the market, indicative quotes and comparators. As is normal for programmes of this nature, a Final Business Case will be produced for the complete programme as soon as sufficient certainty is available.

63.   OCC and RBFA jointly received £3.6M to secure resilience and efficiency improvements in their control rooms. All programme costs will be met from this funding source. The headline areas of expenditure include:-

Item	Capital £ '000	Revenue £ '000	Total amount £ '000
Programme staffing	[11]184	224	408
Other staff costs	0	388	388
Estimated TUPE and redeployment costs	0	470	470
Premises costs	473	0	473
Technology	1,113	650	1,763
Remaining Contingency Fund			**98**
Total Programme Budget	**1,770**	**1,732**	**3,600**
DCLG Grant	2,600	1,000	3,600

64.   The DCLG grant determination notice, specifies the ratio of capital and revenue within the grant. This does not correspond to the ratio of indicative expenditure and further financial work is underway to ensure full compliance with the capital governance procedures and grant conditions. Respective finance lead officers are confident that this will be achievable and does not represent a risk to the programme.

65.   Due to differing starting points in the need to invest in our legacy systems and the fact that significant costs associated with the building are allocated to RBFA, the programme spend is not distributed equally between both parties. £2.1M will be spent in RBFA and £1.4M in Oxfordshire with £0.1M remaining in the contingency fund.

66.   The MOU sets out the financial arrangements and responsibilities for the accounting authority. RBFA is the lead accounting FRS for the programme. OCC internal audit will be responsible for carrying out audits relating to the programme.

67.   During and after the termination of the FiReControl programme the Public Accounts Committee took significant interest in the financial arrangements. It is envisaged that this will be repeated with the DCLG grant.

Steady state

68.   The finance work stream, working with the wider Programme Board has examined the potential steady state costs. These are based on actual costs where known, or informed estimates where they depend on future procurement exercises. The following table sets out the current and projected steady state revenue costs, per year. All figures are based on 2012 prices.

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[11] Staffing costs can be capitalised if they directly contribute to the creation of the asset

Expenditure and Projected Savings	£ '000
Current OFRS control expenditure	980
Current RBFRS control expenditure	1,329
Total current control expenditure	2,309
Total projected control expenditure	1,650
Total projected control saving	**659**

69. The total gross savings delivered by the TVFCS Programme equate to £0.659M per annum. This is 29% of current control budgets or £9.885M over the 15 year projected lifetime of the programme.

70. The total gross savings identified have reduced from those identified earlier in the programme and used within the public consultation process. This is due to greater clarity becoming available in some of the steady state costs as the business case has matured. The savings identified at this time are considered to be a minimum and further refinement of the business case may increase the gross savings identified.

71. Both FRSs have considered the position regarding steady state costs. One option could be based on an equal division of these costs between the two joint partners. However, when considering this, activity levels and potential operational risk as identified by population and tax base are identified and the most important direct factors in the workload or potential workload and therefore revenue costs of the control room. Three metrics have been identified. These are:-

- Population – recognising that changing population numbers affect operational risk and activity

- Tax base – recognising that changes in the numbers of properties affect operational risk and activity

- Incidents attended – recognising the actual workload created by incidents attended and creating a positive incentive for reducing operational activity levels by proactive prevention activities.

This approach is set out below:-

Steady State Cost Apportionment Model						
	RBFRS		OFRS		Total	
	£	%	£	%	£	%
Population	865,000	57.02	652,000	42.98	1,517,000	100.00
Tax Base	336,149	57.85	244,920	42.15	581,069	100.00
Incidents Attended	8,375	59.24	5,763	40.76	14,138	100.00
Average % (population, tax base & incidents attended)		**58.04** Rounded **58**		**41.96** Rounded **42**		**100.00**

72. A proposal was endorsed at the PSG meeting on 11th June 2012 based on the equal weighting of the three components based on a three year rolling average of all measures. It was further agreed that this approach should be updated with relevant information annually, reviewed every three years after cut over, at any point a third party is provided a Service and on formal written request of either party. PSG Members agreed to recommend this approach to their respective authorities for decision.

73. Assuming that this approach is adopted, the effects are as shown below with a comparison of the 50:50 figures:-

Projected Expenditure	Oxfordshire £ '000	Royal Berkshire £ '000	Total £ '000
Current control expenditure	980	1,329	2,309
Projected joint control expenditure in steady state			1,650
Expenditure based on 50:50 basis	825	825	1,650
Expenditure based on 42:58 basis	693	957	1,650
Projected Savings			
Projected saving			659
Savings based on 50:50 basis	155	504	659
% of total saving	22%	78%	100%
% of individual FRS expenditure	16%	40%	NA
Savings based on 42:58 basis	287	372	659
% of total saving	44%	56%	100%
% of individual FRS expenditure	29%	28%	NA

74. The table above shows that, if the proposed apportionment of costs is approved, the gross savings are £287k and £372k for Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire respectively. The respective proportions of the total savings are 44% and 56% respectively, equating closely to the apportionment formula. Both FRSs project a similar saving on their current control budgets of 29% and 28% respectively.

Steady state – additional revenue implications

75. However, there are three factors that require consideration before the above gross financial savings can be considered. These are:

   a. Core systems refresh. This additional cost represents the medium term replacement of essential items within the primary and secondary control rooms which cannot be dependent on joint agreement or an "ad hoc" approach and should be funded by an annual contribution to a

replacement fund. These costs are proposed to be apportioned on a equal basis.

   b. Individual FRS additional revenue consequences of aligning systems and procedures (e.g. uplift to digital radio provision in Oxfordshire and provision of additional Mobile Data Terminals[12] software licensing for both FRSs).

   c. Individual FRS renewals funding for non-core medium and longer term renewals (e.g. mobilising equipment within individual fire stations and Mobile Data Terminals on fire engines).

76. None of the above costs are currently recognised within either FRS base budgets. Consequently, where any significant control room system replacement has been required, Officers have historically approached their respective authorities for capital funding.

77. For item a) above, if OCC or RBFA could not support a capital injection at the necessary time it would compromise the running of the function of the joint control and jeopardise the statutory function of both Authorities. This can be avoided by a clause a clause within the steady state legal agreement requiring commitment to this critical funding.   This equates to £93k pa, shared on an equal basis. The creation of this dedicated core system renewals fund ensures that during the period of the agreement the core system will be replaced as required to ensure continuing effectiveness and resilience.

78. In addition to the above, a method of funding b) and c) is required. The former represents an increase in revenue cost incurred as a consequence of systems alignment. The latter item represents renewals funding for station based mobilising equipment and Mobile Data Terminals etc. Both of these aspects are clearly identified in the detailed budget to avoid any possibility of uncertainty in the future. It is proposed that both of these revenue costs are funded by the individual FRS efficiency savings.

79. Due to the differing starting points of OFRS and RBFRS, b) and c) differ between the 2 FRSs. These costs will be borne in full by the individual FRS incurring them.

80. Full recognition of all three items reduces the net efficiency savings. This is set out below:

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[12] Mobile Data Terminals (MDT's) are computer systems permanently connected to the mobilising system and other back office systems to provide information to firefighters or allow automated messages to be sent to control.

Item	Oxfordshire	Royal Berkshire	Total £ '000
Gross projected (apportioned) savings	287.0	372.0	659.0
Additional revenue requirements			**Total**
a) Core systems refresh	46.5	46.5	93.0
b) Additional revenue implications	56.6	16.9	73.5
c) Non-core systems refresh	33.2	28.9	62.1
Net financial savings	**150.7**	**279.7**	**430.4**

81. This approach also offers the added certainty that no further capital bids would be made by either OFRS or RBFRS for any currently foreseen aspect of control and mobilising equipment for the entire duration of the programme. To promote continued resilience this approach allows for a mid-life ICT upgrade and creates a renewals fund for a subsequent system after 15 years providing both authorities options for the future.

Legal Implications

82. Irrespective of the chosen governance arrangements, neither OCC nor RBFA can transfer the statutory responsibility for meeting the requirements of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to another party. Both parties remain individually responsible and accountable.

83. PSG have endorsed the recommendation that the steady state governance arrangements will be provided by the creation of a Joint Committee under Section 102 of the Local Government Act 1972. The committee can discharge any function of the appointing authorities, and advise on the discharge of any function. OCC and RBFA will delegate to the Joint Committee the strategic direction of the TVFCS. In addition the Joint Committee will track benefits realisation against performance measures proposed by PSG and approved by the Joint Committee.

84. One of the benefits of this approach is that it encourages a partnership style relationship rather than a contractual structure. The relationship will be of joint equal partners providing strategic direction of a single joint control. This relationship is not one of provider and purchaser.

85. A Joint Committee is not a separate legal entity and has no corporate status and therefore cannot own property or enter into contracts in its own right. Therefore the agreement between OCC and RBFA will set out which authority will have the primary responsibility for particular areas depending on the nature of the issue.

86. It is intended that the Joint Committee will be restricted to the minimum number of Members as is possible to ensure minimisation of governance overheads. OCC and RBFA will have the same number of voting Members. The Joint Committee will be advised by FRS Senior Officers as required.

87.	The advantages to the establishment of a Joint Committee include:-

- They permit authorities to retain a Member level control over the arrangements[13]
- Typically these arrangements fall outside the scope of the public procurement regime because of their administrative arrangements and no contract is entered into.

88.	It is intended that, subject to approval to proceed, that the current MOU is replaced with a legally binding partnership agreement. This will regulate the continued programme governance arrangements. In addition it will require the formulation of the Joint Committee which will initially operate in shadow form.

89.	In addition the PSG will ensure that the programme creates joint operational management structures and performance management arrangements for the day-to-day operational control of the TVFCS. This will be approved by the PSG and in due course the Joint Committee.

Risk Management and Business Continuity Implications

90.	Risk management and recognition of business continuity requirements are central to the programme. The programme is structured in three phases. This allows resilience benefits to be delivered quickly. This approach is a direct response to meeting current and future statutory responsibilities and minimising organisational risk.

91.	Programme and steady state risk management considerations are set out below.

Programme

92.	A risk register is in place and is actively monitored by PSG and managed by the Senior Responsible Owner. There are a number of risks that will require active mitigation. None of these are considered to outweigh the risk that would otherwise be created by not progressing the programme. The risk register is available as a background document.

93.	Early improvements in business continuity are made possible through the phased approach and early introduction of the ability to take calls and mobilise on a reciprocal basis.

Steady state

94.	Steady state risk analysis applicable to the joint arrangements has been undertaken. This is available as a background paper. PSG and subsequently

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[13] For OCC as fire control is deemed an executive function, only members of the OCC Executive can be Members of the Joint Committee

the Joint Committee will be responsible for ensuring they are monitored and managed. There is little difference between these risks and the risks that currently exist with 2 fire control rooms.

Equality Implications

95. The Equality Act 2010 requires all public authorities to assess the impact of their policies on communities. In this context, policy is a general term that covers the TVFCS programme. A Service and Communities Impact Assessment (SCIA) ensures policies meet the diverse needs of the organisations' customers and wider stakeholders. This assessment is attached as Annex 3. The assessment is iterative and will be updated at significant decision points within the programme.

96. The assessment examines the programme from the public and staff viewpoints. In neither case is any identifiable detriment identified as a result of the programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

97. **The Oxfordshire County Council Cabinet is RECOMMENDED:-**

   Subject to:-

   1. **the decision of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority to approve the relocation of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service HQ site from Dee Road, Reading, to Calcot, West Berkshire, and**
   2. **the approval of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's subsequent decision to proceed with the TVFCS Programme,**

   to:-

   a. **Approve the progression of the programme to create a joint control room with Royal Berkshire Fire Authority**
   b. **Confirm the future location of the primary control room as Calcot, Berkshire**
   c. **Confirm the future location of the secondary control room as Kidlington, Oxfordshire**
   d. **Approve the apportionment methodology**
   e. **Approve the creation of the a Joint Committee and the underpinning legal arrangements**
   f. **Delegate to the Chief Fire Officer:-**
      i. **authority to sign the legally binding programme partnership agreement which will include the decision of the lead authority for employment matters**
      ii. **authority to sign the legally binding steady state partnership agreement**

        iii. the identification of and arrangements with the remote buddy FRS

g. Require the Programme Sponsoring Group to ensure the human resources strategy maximises the opportunities to support control staff throughout the programme

h. Require the Chief Fire Officer to ensure business continuity plans are in place to maintain the continued effectiveness of the respective control room up to the point of transition into the single joint control

i. Require the Chief Fire Officer to support the appointed Members of the TVFCS Joint Committee to provide strategic direction and track benefit realisation.

Contact Officer:

Dave Etheridge
Chief Fire Officer
Oxfordshire County Council
Fire and Rescue Service
July 2012

Attachments
      Annex 1:   Premises selection report
      Annex 2:   Consultation response report and annexes A, B and C
      Annex 3:   Service and community impact assessment (SCIA)

Background Papers
      Outline Business Case
      Programme risk register
      Steady state risk analysis