Opinion Research Services

OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk
Working for you

Proposed Thames Valley Fire Control Service

Report of Public Consultation for Royal Berkshire and Oxfordshire (County Council) Fire and Rescue Services

May 2012

Opinion Research Services
The Strand
Swansea
SA1 1AF

01792 535300
www.ors.org.uk

As with all our studies, findings from this research
are subject to Opinion Research Services'
Standard Terms and Conditions of Contract.

Any press release or publication of the findings
of this research requires the advance approval of ORS.
Such approval will only be refused on the grounds of
inaccuracy or misrepresentation

© Copyright May 2012

Contents

Acknowledgements

Opinion Research Services (ORS) is pleased to have worked with Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) and Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS) on the important consultation reported here. We trust this report will contribute to their consideration of a Joint Fire Control service and their future public engagement.

We thank RBFRS and OFRS for commissioning the research, and are especially grateful to Bryan Morgan (RBFRS) and Mat Carlile (OFRS) who did so much to ensure the smooth successful running of the project, particularly by attending the public forums: they listened to the participants' views and answered questions fully and frankly; and their input was essential in achieving an informed debate.

Above all, we are grateful to the members of the public who took part in the forums and shared their views. They were patient in listening to background information before entering positively into the spirit of open discussions. They all engaged with the issues and discussed their ideas readily.

At all stages of the project, ORS' status as an independent organisation consulting the public as objectively as possible was recognised and respected. We are grateful for the trust, and we hope this report will be useful in thinking about the proposed Thames Valley Fire Control Service and in strengthening RBFRS' and OFRS' engagement with the public.

Opinion Research Services | Thames Valley Fire Control Service Consultation Report
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

May 2012

ORS Project Team

Project Design and Management

Dale Hall

Kelly Lock

Fieldwork Management

Kirsty Millbank

Leanne Hurlow

Forum Facilitator

Dale Hall

Report Authors

Dale Hall

Kelly Lock

Project Overview

The Commission

1. On the basis of our long-standing experience with the UK fire and rescue services, and our status as the sole approved provider of research and consultation services under the terms of the Fire Services Consultation Association's National Framework Contract, ORS was jointly commissioned by Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) and Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS) to convene and facilitate two public engagement forums (one for each FRS) to discuss the proposed Thames Valley Fire Control Service.

2. The forums form an important part of a wider consultation programme encompassing both the public and FRSs' staff in both counties.

3. ORS' role was to design, recruit, facilitate and report the two forums. We worked in collaboration with RBFRS and OFRS to prepare informative stimulus material for the meetings before facilitating the discussions and preparing this independent report of findings.

4. Since this was a joint commission by both FRSs, we have prepared an 'integrated' single report – though this does not prevent any differences between the two forums being highlighted. It is helpful that both organisations have agreed to share all the findings openly since both parties will be interested to know how the residents of each of the counties respond to the draft proposals.

Deliberative Research: Public Forums

5. The forums were designed to inform and 'engage' the participants both with the issues and with RBFRS/OFRS – by using a 'deliberative' approach to encourage members of the public to reflect in depth about the strategic roles of the fire and rescue service, while both receiving and questioning background information and discussing service delivery and financial issues in detail. Both the meetings lasted for about 2.5 hours. In total, there were 46 diverse participants at the forums – drawn from across Royal Berkshire and Oxfordshire. The dates of the meetings and attendance levels by members of the public at each forum were as follows:

AREA	TIME AND DATE	NUMBER OF ATTENDEES
Royal Berkshire (Reading)	**6:00pm – 8:30pm** **Tuesday 1st May 2012**	**25**
Oxfordshire (Oxford)	**6:00pm – 8:30pm** **Wednesday 2nd May 2012**	**21**

6. The attendance target for each meeting was between 20 and 25 people, so the recruitment programme was successful. At Reading, around a third had attended previous forums held in January and December 2011 and had been re-invited by ORS; and the remaining two-thirds were new participants. The latter were recruited by random-digit telephone dialling from ORS' Social Research Call Centre. Such recruitment by telephone is an effective way of ensuring that the participants are independent and broadly representative

of the wider community. Oxfordshire participants were recruited from Oxfordshire County Council's Citizens' Panel by SPA Future Thinking. In both cases (as shown in the table below), participants were a broad cross-section of residents from the local areas and, as standard good practice, were recompensed for their time and efforts in travelling and taking part.

CRITERIA	ROYAL BERKSHIRE (READING)	OXFORDSHIRE (OXFORD)
Gender	Male: 15 Female: 10	Male: 13 Female: 8
Age	18-34: 6 35-54: 9 55+: 10	18-34: 13 35-54: 7 55+: 1
Social Grade	AB: 8 C1: 7 C2: 4 DE: 6[1]	AB: 4 C1: 6 C2: 5 DE: 3 NOT KNOWN: 3
Ethnicity	3 BME	6 BME
Limiting Long-term Illness	3	2
Geographical Area	Bracknell Forest: 5 Reading: 11 Slough: 3 West Berkshire: 2 Windsor and Maidenhead: 3 Wokingham: 1	Cherwell: 5 Oxford City: 10 South Oxfordshire: 1 Vale of the White Horse: 3 West Oxfordshire: 2

7. In recruitment, care was taken to ensure that no potential participants were disqualified or disadvantaged by disabilities or any other factors, and the venues at which the forums met were readily accessible. People's special needs were taken into account in the recruitment and venues.

8. Although, like all other forms of qualitative consultation, forums cannot be certified as statistically representative samples of public opinion, the two meetings reported here gave diverse groups of people from Berkshire and Oxfordshire the opportunity to comment in detail on the possible Thames Valley Fire Control Service. Because the recruitment was inclusive and participants were diverse, we are satisfied that the outcomes of the meeting (as reported here) are broadly indicative of how informed opinion would incline on the basis of similar discussions. In summary, the outcomes reported here are reliable as examples of the reflections and opinions of diverse informed people reacting to the proposed change.

---

[1] Social Grade Classifications are: AB: Higher/intermediate managerial/administrative/professional; C1: Supervisory, clerical/junior managerial/administrative/professional; C2: Skilled manual; D: Semi-skilled/unskilled manual workers; E: On state benefit, unemployed, lowest grade workers. http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/

Discussion Framework

9. ORS worked in collaboration with RBFRS and OFRS to prepare informative stimulus material for the meetings, which considered detailed information and discussed a range of important issues, including:

> Estimates of fire risk and the costs of the fire service
>
> Profiles of RBFRS and OFRS – including their resources, strategic roles and challenges
>
> Importance of prevention in the context of protection and response services
>
> Impact of public spending review over four years
>
> The role of a Fire Control Room
>
> RBFRS' and OFRS' current Fire Control Room arrangements
>
> The recent history of Fire Control Room
>
> The proposal for a joint Thames Valley Fire Control Service and its advantages
>
> Alternative options, including
>
> > Independent Fire Control Rooms
> >
> > Combined Emergency Service Control Centre.

10. Each part of the meeting began with a presentation devised by ORS to both inform and stimulate discussion of the issues, following which the above matters were reviewed in sequence. Participants were given extensive time for questions prior to being invited to make up their minds on each discussion topic. Not all the issues were discussed in equal detail: for example, the budgetary issues were explained, but were not treated as the primary focus for discussion; whereas the proposal for a joint Control Centre itself was examined very carefully in both forums. In essence, the key consultation questions were:

> Do you agree or disagree that there are good reasons for RBFRS and OFRS to collaborate in a Joint Fire Control Room?
>
> What do you think about…?
>
> > The financial case
> >
> > The arguments based on greater 'resilience' (i.e. the capacity to deal effectively with pressure)
> >
> > The arguments based on efficiency
> >
> > The alternative options.

The Report

11. This report concisely reviews the sentiments and judgements of participants about the proposed Thames Valley Fire Control Service. Verbatim quotations are used, in indented italics, not because we agree or disagree with them – but for their vividness in capturing recurrent points of views. ORS does not endorse the opinions in question, but seeks only to portray them accurately and clearly. While quotations are used, the report is not a verbatim transcript of the sessions, but an interpretative summary of the issues raised by participants in free-ranging discussions.

Consultation Findings with Commentary

Introduction

12. This section reports the findings from the forums while also revealing the reasoning of participants. It has not been necessary to report the findings from the two forums separately because both sets of participants shared considerable common ground - but where there were real differences in opinion the groups are compared and contrasted. Not all the individuals gave equal emphasis to each aspect of the discussion, but, taken overall, the forums considered a wide range of issues that are reported fully below.

13. Before discussing the main issues, both forums reviewed the resources and profiles of each FRS, with particular reference to their strategic roles in integrated risk management planning and to the current public spending review which has reduced the central government funding to both organisations.

Awareness of Risk

14. At Reading, the Berkshire participants were relatively accurate when estimating the number of annual accidental fire deaths in Berkshire, perhaps reflecting what about a third of them had learned in previous forums. Most estimated that the average number of annual accidental fire deaths in Berkshire is between two and twelve – though some guessed as high as 100 per year! While many of the guesses were higher than the actual average figure, which is about two or three per year (with none sometimes), the overall range of estimates was much lower (and more realistic) than is normally case elsewhere in the country.

15. The Oxfordshire participants at Oxford (who had not attended a similar forum previously) were more inclined to over-estimate the number of annual accidental fire deaths in Oxfordshire. Most guessed at somewhere between 25 and 100, but there were some serious estimates that county-wide accidental fire deaths were as high as 650 per year! The estimates of the Oxford forum may also reflect the fact that almost two-thirds of the group were aged 34 or under – and only one person was aged 55-plus.

16. In the light of these estimates, it is perhaps worthwhile to record the actual recent death rates in fires (the averages are in brackets):

	RBFRS	OFRS
2002	1	5
2003	4	5
2004	0	3
2005	1	2
2006	3	5
2007	4	2
2008	7	0
2009	1	1
2010	2	4
TOTAL	23 (2.5)	27 (3)

Opinion Research Services | Thames Valley Fire Control Service Consultation Report
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

May 2012

Awareness of Finances

17. When asked how much it costs to crew one 24/7 wholetime fire engine per year, again people's estimates in both forums varied considerably – ranging from £180K upwards to a more accurate £1M. However, many of those who did not give an estimate said they had *no idea*.

18. Most participants over-estimated when asked about RBFRS' and OFRS' annual budgets to the nearest £5M. Most guesses were in the range of £25M to £75M; but some participants at Oxford guessed £400M!

Main Discussion Issues

19. In the main discussion, participants were asked for their opinions on three main options for the future of Fire Control Room services in RBFRS and OFRS, namely:

> Retaining their respective independent Fire Control Rooms (with resilience support from back-up networks)

> Seeking to create a Combined Emergency Services Control Centre (jointly with the Police and Ambulance Services)

> Creating a Joint 'Thames Valley Fire Control Room' based on collaboration between RBFRS and OFRS.

20. In explaining each of these views as plausible candidates, relevant comparisons were made: for example, with Merseyside FRS which is pursuing the second option with the other Merseyside emergency services; and Gloucester, which has a Tri-service emergency control centre. The fact that RBFRS and OFRS had originally sought to include Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes FRS was also explained.

21. The important role of the Fire Control Rooms was also explained in detail – with example scenarios of the types of calls they handle. In this way, participants became aware of the important role that IT plays in their call-handling and deployment of fire engines; and the need for investment following years' of uncertainty caused by the initiative for regional control centres was also highlighted.
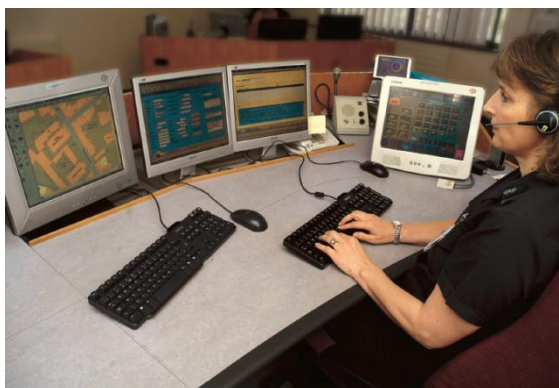
22. Within this context, there were initial discussions of each of the three options, as reported in the following sections.

Opinion Research Services | Thames Valley Fire Control Service Consultation Report
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

May 2012

Option 1: Independent Control Centres (with resilience support networks)

23. Although the retention of independent Control Centres drew some support insofar as *we know it works*, most participants in both Forums agreed quite quickly that this solution would be likely to represent poor value for money, in light of reducing call volumes:

> *We have two Control Centres at the moment, which seem to be under-used, so it would be good to economise (Berkshire).*

24. There was also concern that retaining independent Fire Control Rooms (and the cost involved in doing so) could result in reductions elsewhere in the service:

> *Surely, it would it involve reductions elsewhere? (Berkshire)*

25. Both forums asked if Fire Control Room staff require detailed personal knowledge of local neighbourhoods to operate successfully, but they were readily reassured that this is not the case in the context of Geographical Information Systems; and they both appreciated that it is not feasible for Berkshire or Oxfordshire Fire Control Room staff actually to know local neighbourhoods right across their counties.

26. At Oxford, however, a minority suggested that an independent Fire Control Room may be feasible with some amendments, such as: a reduction in staff numbers at both sites; utilising control staff for other support functions; and renting out space within each centre to local businesses to maximise income:

> *Why don't the existing centres just reduce their numbers of staff substantially? The call numbers suggest they could do that… (Oxfordshire)*

> *If the centres are under-utilised, could you rent out some space to local businesses? (Oxfordshire)*

> *If there are too few calls, could you use the operators for other support functions? (Oxfordshire).*

27. Overall, though, the forums were not inherently attracted to separate Fire Control Room. The Oxford forum certainly showed interest in questions about how an independent centre could be made to work, but (as we shall see) the enquiries were more theoretical than evidence of loyalty to separate Fire Control Rooms.

Option 2: Combined Emergency Services Control Centre

28. The idea of a combined Emergency Services Control Centre was raised spontaneously by a few members of the Oxfordshire forum and initially some suggested that it might have some merits:

> *Could you link with other emergency services? Would this work? (Oxfordshire)*

> *Your centre and the police centre are in Kidlington – so could you combine with them? (Oxfordshire)[2]*

> *IT systems are very different so mergers with other kinds of organisations can be hard…but they can be managed so is this insurmountable? (Oxfordshire)*

---

[2] Thames Valley Police Control Rooms are located in Abingdon and Milton Keynes.

29. On the basis of these kinds of considerations, a small minority in the Oxfordshire forum preferred option two throughout the forum.

30. However, in both Berkshire and Oxfordshire the majority of participants felt that an Emergency Services Control Centre for all three services would be difficult to negotiate and achieve in practice – particularly given the different geographical areas covered by the different authorities, and the varying processes and procedures of the three emergency services.

31. Furthermore, while the forums recognised that different specialist operators would deal with the calls for each of the emergency services, they noted that a shared Emergency Control Building could result in both FRSs paying too big a contribution to the build and running costs of the Centre – if the costs were split more or less equally when the Police and Ambulance services take many more calls than the FRSs. Some typical comments were:

> It's a non-starter; it's too complicated and hard! (Berkshire)

> The ambulance service covers a much wider area (Oxfordshire)

> The only plus would be to use one building and not three (Berkshire)

> The shared costs would be based on space not calls – as a percentage of the total – which would 'over-charge' the FRS and be relatively expensive (Berkshire)

> Would you pay for the space proportionately or for the calls proportionately in a joint centre? (Oxfordshire)

> There would be costs in terms of needing a new, large, purpose-built building (Berkshire)

> The three services are very different – the police and ambulances get most calls (Berkshire)

> Do any of the other emergency services want to get together like this elsewhere? (Oxfordshire)

32. Overall then, while a small number at Oxford liked the idea of a Combined Emergency Services Control Centre, the great majority of participants thought it was impractical and undesirable due to non-alignment of authority areas, different organisations; having different processes and procedures, and the likely costs to the FRSs.

Option 3: Joint Thames Valley Fire Control Room

33. During the course of the discussion about establishing a joint Thames Valley Fire Control Room, a number of initial questions and concerns were raised, principally around the need for new infrastructure (new building and better/more integrated IT systems) and the costs involved in this:

> Would we need a new building? (Berkshire)

> Would the call centres be in new buildings? (Berkshire)

> Will there be significant investment in new IT? (Berkshire)

> How do modern IT systems differ from what we have now? (Berkshire)

> Do the IT systems match up? (Oxfordshire)

> How would the IT systems work in practice in relation to directing the fire engines to the incidents and cross-border collaboration? (Oxfordshire)

> *If you have two IT systems, will you just switch one off and then cover the whole area with one of them or do you need new investment? (Oxfordshire)*

34. There was also discussion of the financial issues (the costs involved in closing the existing individual Fire Control Rooms, the exact nature of the savings made, the way in which costs will be split between the two FRSs, and whether the finance available for the project will be ring-fenced). These financial issues were particularly prominent in the Oxfordshire forum:

> *How much will it cost to save the £880K? (Oxfordshire)*
>
> *There will be a one-off cost in closing one centre! (Oxfordshire)*
>
> *Regarding the funding, how would the co-operation work in terms of dividing the costs? How would the costs be allocated? (Oxfordshire)*
>
> *How would the costs be charged? 50/50 or by the cost per call? (Oxfordshire)*
>
> *If you have two IT systems, will you just switch one off and then cover the whole area with one of them – or do you need new investment so both the IT systems are fit for purpose? (Oxfordshire)*
>
> *Would the grant funding for the project be ring-fenced? Is the Control Centre funding separate from the rest of the budget? (Oxfordshire)*
>
> *How does the cost compare with outsourcing the Centre to another provider? (Berkshire)*

35. In both forums, some participants focused on the potential for redundancies and the views of staff on the proposed change, but there was a range of views on these issues:

> *I just worry about redundancies (Berkshire)*
>
> *Would the total number of staff be reduced and by how much? (Oxfordshire)*
>
> *How would the redundancy be managed – to assist or redeploy the staff? (Oxfordshire)*
>
> *Have you asked the staff about these proposals? What do they think about it? (Berkshire)*
>
> *Are the staff happy with it? How do they feel? (Berkshire)*
>
> *Are there any implications for strikes? (Berkshire)*
>
> *But it is our taxes that are paying for two Centres – and one of them is unnecessary! (Berkshire)*

36. Some participants wanted reassurance that a joint Control is not a first step towards a full merger of the two FRSs:

> *Would this be a precedent for merging the two Fire and Rescue Services in a few years' time – like some ambulances merged? (Oxfordshire)*
>
> *Would this be a precedent for a full merger of the Fire and Rescue Services? (Berkshire)*

37. Others focused on the potential impact of the proposal on response times:

> *Would this worsen response times? (Berkshire)*

38. The 'local knowledge' of the Control Centre staff was a matter of some concern, but generally acknowledged to be less important than normally thought:

Opinion Research Services | Thames Valley Fire Control Service Consultation Report
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

May 2012

Do the control room staff have local knowledge that would not be available in a joint control room? (Oxfordshire)

Local knowledge is important, but [even] in the Tilehurst Control Centre they don't know the whole county so local knowledge is not such a factor nowadays (Berkshire)

The Centre could be based anywhere from an operational point of view (Berkshire)

39. Both forums thought it is important to clarify the management and accountability of any joint Fire Control Room:

If it doesn't work, will people be accountable for it? (Berkshire)

How would the new control room be managed? To whom would it be accountable? (Oxfordshire)

Are you happy with the communications and relations between the two services now? (Oxfordshire)

If it does not work, how will it be undone? Will one service be deprived of a control centre and have nothing to fall back on? (Oxfordshire)

40. Accountability seemed particularly important in relation to a joint Fire Control Room's ability to manage a high volume of calls and incident peaks (and what would happen if this proves to be unmanageable):

If you had many emergency calls coming in, would the overflow go to another FRS control and could you manage the peaks in incidents? (Oxfordshire)

Will the new centre affect cross-border collaboration with Surrey and Hampshire? (Berkshire)

41. Both forums were interested in the timescales for changes and the motivations of the two Services:

How long would it take to phase this in? (Berkshire)

Would you do this if there were no savings to be made? Is the grant the underlying reason? (Oxfordshire)

42. Ultimately, however, and despite the questions and issues referred to above, the great majority of participants across the two forums favoured the creation of a joint Thames Valley Fire Control Service. After questions and consideration, there seemed to be few real disadvantages:

There seem to be many pluses but are there any negatives apart from the loss of staff? (Berkshire)

43. One person at Reading had attended the forum with the express intention of rejecting the proposal, but she was convinced of its merits by the evidence and discussions:

I thought it should be stand-alone, but having heard all the points I feel my worries have been answered! (Berkshire)

44. It was also suggested that the public at large will not even be aware of the change if it is implemented – and that RBFRS and OFRS should thus publicise how conscientiously they have engaged and consulted with the public on the issue in order to raise awareness:

I don't think the public will even realise that the system has been changed (Berkshire)

It would be a good idea to publicise that you have consulted with people – to show how conscientious you have been (Berkshire).

An Ideal Location for a FCC?

45.   Regarding the location of the proposed Thames Valley Fire Control Room – whether it should be sited at the Reading or Kidlington headquarters – the consensus in both forums was that the merits of the proposal should not depend on the location. Both meetings agreed readily that neither authority should just promote its own base uncritically – for it is important to find the best and most cost-effective site. This sentiment was particularly strong at the Reading forum. At Oxford, there was some concern about the loss of employment locally, but the **general consensus at both meeting was that the site should be selected on its merits alone**:

It should be the most cost effective [site] to save money and get better equipment without wastage and a new building (Oxfordshire)

The centre could be based anywhere from an operational point of view (Berkshire)

Regarding the location of the control centre, the relative cost is the single biggest factor that should influence the choice (Berkshire)

46.   At Reading, one person suggested that a border location would allow staff from both RBFRS and OFRS to accept posts at the new Fire Control Room – but most people quickly acknowledged the impracticality of this idea in terms of staff travelling to work and the costs of a wholly new base somewhere.

Overall Judgements

47.   The account of the discussions so far show that while participants raised many issues, they were certainly not hostile to the proposal for a joint Fire Control Room – indeed they were generally very favourable. In this context, in response to questions about productivity and costs, towards the end of each meeting the forums were shown the following data (from the Consultation Document) about the cost of running the existing and proposed Fire Control Rooms.

Comparative Efficiency Table

Service	Emergencies attended p.a.	Ctrl Staffing	Avg Emergencies per Operator/ p.a.	Avg Emergencies per Operator/ Shift	Staffing Costs/ Emergency £
London	120,692	115	1,049	6.36	52.45
TVFCS *	13,217	30	440	2.6	77.99
Lancashire	21,158	42	503	3.0	78.64
Kent	17,653	36	490	2.9	90.15
Humberside	11,543	33	349	2.1	130.08
RBFRS	7,674	34	225	1.36	146.58
OFRS	5,543	26	213	1.29	169.81

* Indicative figures

Opinion Research Services | Thames Valley Fire Control Service Consultation Report
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

May 2012

48. Having completed their discussions and studied the data above, the **Berkshire participants were almost unanimously in favour** of establishing a Thames Valley Fire Control Room. Indeed, **23 of the 25 people present readily endorsed the proposal** (and there were only two 'don't knows'). In the Reading forum, the least favoured option was a Combined Emergency Services Control Centre.

49. The **Oxfordshire forum was not quite so emphatic in its support, but 14 out of the 21 present supported the joint Fire Control Room**. Of the remaining seven people, only two were opposed and there were five 'don't knows'. The Oxford objectors were principally concerned about *losing jobs for the sake of technology* and they also favoured the more radical option of a combined Emergency Services Call Centre – mainly on the grounds of its greater supposed efficiency.

> *The three emergency services should go together. Bite the bullet! There needs to be better co-ordination and communications of all the emergency services; they should work together more closely (Oxfordshire).*

50. Those at Oxford who abstained from either endorsing or rejecting the proposed joint Fire Control Room felt that they still did not have sufficient information to make an informed decision, and also that the change may not make much practical difference:

> *The presentation should have given more information and it might not make much difference in practice (Oxfordshire)*

> *There are many hidden and technical issues (Oxfordshire).*

51. The underlying concern of some who abstained seemed to be:

> *Would you do this if there were no savings to be made? Is the grant the underlying reason? (Oxfordshire)*

Conclusion

52. Therefore, while the Berkshire and Oxfordshire forums wanted to examine the issues in detail, and raised many matters for discussion, there was overwhelming support for the proposal for a joint Thames Valley Fire Control Centre. The **Berkshire participants were almost unanimously in favour** and **two-thirds of those in Oxfordshire supported the proposal**. Overall, then, across both forums, **eight in ten participants favoured the proposal** after examining in detail the alternatives. The general conclusion was that the benefits of establishing a combined Thames Valley Fire Control Service greatly outweigh any potential difficulties of doing so – and the great majority supported RBFRS' and OFRS' proposed direction of travel.