

# THAMES VALLEY FIRE CONTROL SERVICE



## Thames Valley Fire Control Joint Committee

**Monday, 14 December 2020 at 2.00 pm**

Virtual - Link to follow

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### AGENDA

<b>1. Apologies</b>	
<b>2. Introductions</b>	
<b>3. Declarations of Interest</b>	
<b>4. Minutes of Previous Meeting</b> Minutes of the meeting held on 21 <sup>st</sup> September 2020	(Pages 1 - 12)

<b>5. Matters Arising</b>	
<b>6. Questions from Members (Written Questions)</b>	
<b>7. Questions Submitted Under Standing Order 9.5 (Questions from Members of the Public)</b>	
<b>8. TVFCS Budget 2021/22</b>	(Pages 13 - 20)
<b>9. Quarterly Performance Report - Quarter 2 - 2020/21</b>	(Pages 21 - 46)
<b>10. Approval of Meeting Dates for 2021/22</b> Approval of Meeting Dates for 2021/22  TVFCS Joint Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2021</li><li>• Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021</li></ul> Thames Valley Steering Group Workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Monday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2021</li></ul> TVFCS Joint Committee Workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2022</li></ul>	
<b>11. Forward Plan</b> TVFC Forward Plan	(Pages 47 - 48)



## Thames Valley Fire Control Service Joint Committee Annual Meeting

Monday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2020, 2pm, a remote Microsoft Teams meeting hosted by  
Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service

### Minutes

**Present:** Councillor Judith Heathcoat (OCC) - Chairman  
Councillor Mark Gray (OCC)  
Councillor David Hopkins (BMKFA)  
Councillor Angus Ross (RBFA)  
Councillor David Cannon (RBFA)

**In Attendance:** Michael Adcock (Area Manager, OFRS)  
Christine Barefield (Personal Assistant, OFRS)  
Trevor Ferguson (Chief Fire Officer, RBFRS)  
Steve Foye (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, RBFRS)  
Jim Powell (Area Manager RBFRS)  
Simon Harris (Group Manager, TVFCS)  
Jason Thelwell (Chief Fire Officer, BFRS)  
Dave Norris (Head of Service Delivery, BFRS)  
Asif Hussain (Principal Accountant, BFRS)  
Ryan Maslen (Deputy Head of Finance, RBFRS)

**Public:** Live webcast broadcast: <https://oxon.cc/TVFCSJC21092020>

**01. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lesley Clarke, Rob MacDougall, Mark Arkwell, Calum Bell and Conor Byrne.

**02. INTRODUCTIONS**

All Members introduced themselves. Officers will make their introductions as they present to committee.

**03. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**04. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 JULY 2020**

The following amendments were made to the minutes:

Page 3, Item 10, first line should read OBE.

Page 3, Item 10, 4<sup>th</sup> line should read "Councillor Clarke went on to thank everyone who is involved in TVFCS"

Page 4, last line, there should be no #

Page 5, last line, the word 'in' should be before the word staff

Page 6, Item 12, the last sentence should read "Full Business case as,"

Page 7, paragraph 3, should read: "she did query how certain elements could continue"

Page 7, last paragraph, should read 'may mean there is a clash'

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2020 be amended as per above and then signed as an accurate record by the Chairman.

**05. MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising for discussion.

**06. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS (WRITTEN QUESTIONS)**

None.

## 07. QUESTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER STANDING ORDER 9.5

None

## 08. TVFCS Performance Report Quarter 1 2020/21

The Head of Service Delivery (BFRS) presented the Quarter 1 Performance Report for 2020/21 to the Committee and referred Members back to the Workshop held in Spring of 2019. The workshop had considered how well the format of the previous performance report reflected accurate and appropriate information to Members, taking into account that TVFCS had gone live in April 2015 and, that there had been a number of improvements over the four year period that the Committee wanted to see reflected in the report. The report being presented today delivered on the conversations held at the Workshop and, also started to refresh the way in which information on TVFCS performance was being displayed. The new format showed more closely the activities and, performance of TVFCS into the workings of each individual Fire and Rescue Service by providing operational context that included all activities, not just those within TVFCS and, introduced the headings of Protection, Prevention and Response. The Head of Service Delivery (BFRS) advised that the report highlighted the wider contribution TVFCS makes aside from the response to emergency incidents. The Members were asked to note that this was the first report of this type and, whilst the Senior Responsible Officers were very comfortable with how the report had come together, they would equally welcome feedback from Members on the information that they would like to see or, any changes to how the information is presented.

As expected, during the first quarter of 2020/21, the operating environment had been significantly affected by the COVID19 pandemic particularly with the changes to the working environment. Through the normal planning cycle, the annual plan for TVFCS is usually agreed in February/March each year, with progress reviewed each quarter and, the Head of Service Delivery (BFRS) prefaced the organisational context narrative by advising the Committee that TVFCS staff had been able to deliver their plan over the last quarter despite the pandemic which is of great credit to all of the staff. The ongoing collaboration between the three Fire and Rescue Services remains as strong as ever particularly in support to TVFCS. This has enabled a robust degradation plan to be put in place in the Control Room ensuring that, should staff become adversely affected due to the Covid19 Pandemic or more widely by a range of other factors, a plan is in place for staff absence to ensure the support to the public remains and, this has been the case in the last quarter. Action was taken to restrict access to the Control Room and, Secondary Control Room at Kidlington during the early stages of the pandemic to ensure that any exposure to the Control Room and the staff themselves was kept to a minimum. A combination of those actions along with the diligence of the staff, using increased hygiene prevention and control measures had, ensured the exposure to staff and the impact on performance had been kept to a minimum. The Head of Service Delivery (BFRS) advised that those arrangements remain in place.

This quarter, and particularly for Buckinghamshire the introduction of the new

station at West Ashland known as the 'Blue Light Hub' in Milton Keynes has been a significant success. The planned go-live date of, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020, had been achieved with the work by colleagues in the TVFCS and, across the three Services. The contribution by Capita in this seamless transition was noted by the Committee.

Recruitment had taken place in January 2020 with two new members of staff joining the TVFCS team in June on fixed term contracts with their induction training being completed enabling them to join their operational colleagues in August. A further two members of staff left TVFCS during this quarter which represents 5% of the total establishment. The Committee were asked to note that the recruitment activity during the quarter attracted a high number of applicants. The Head of Service Delivery (BFRS) suggested that some detail on the quality and diversity of those applicants could be brought back to a future meeting. This would demonstrate the high level of skill and experience the recruitment had attracted.

As expected, sickness levels in the first quarter of 2020/21 had reduced compared with quarter 4 in 2019/20 but were slightly higher than for the equivalent period in 2019/20. The Head of Service Delivery (BFRS) advised that these patterns were consistent with the seasonal variation that would be expected and, were not attributed to any other extra-ordinary factors. The Control Room had been affected by Covid19 with two members of staff requiring a short-term absence as they were symptomatic with the symptoms identified for coronavirus at that time. No sickness absences relating to COVID19 were recorded in May and June, highlighting the success of the preventative measures taken. The sickness levels displayed within the report indicated that they remain within acceptable levels.

In accordance with the RBFRS Resourcing and Development team, TVFCS staff have now moved from the NVQ system to the new Development and Assessment Pathways (DAPS) for all roles ensuring that operational staff within the Control Room now have the same development pathway which is shared by Fire and Rescue Services linked to the National Operational Standards for Fire Control staff. This change re-enforces the integration of the control room staff with the wider organisation. The relatively high number of staff at Crew Manager level currently going through their development pathway is a reflection of, the number of TVFCS staff achieving promotion within the department over the preceding 18 months and is evidence of the progress that has been made in developing our staff. Previously the report had reported against competence which had perhaps, been seen as mis-leading in some areas as it was competence for pay purposes and, also competence in role. To remove the possible mis-leading nature of that term the report has changed to development which better reflects the position of staff within the Control Room.

The Head of Service Delivery (BFRS) appraised the meeting of the new section within the report relating to Prevention, Protection and Response. The narrative was relatively short for this quarter however; a better understanding of the contribution the Control Room makes to Prevention and Protection activity will develop in this section over time. The report reflected on how much additional value is given to the FRS by the Control Staff by showing that

29 members of the public with defective smoke alarms were referred on for further assistance from the FRS directly from the Control Room. Traditionally the first contact a member of the public would have for a non-emergency would be through the website and, this reporting has shown that, a call of this type coming into the Control Room can be dealt with effectively. In addition, 34 queries into Control were dealt with under safeguarding procedures demonstrating how the Control Room can assist with protecting those individuals with other vulnerabilities that may present. TVFCS also dealt with 6 notifications from partner agencies during the quarter, primarily Thames Valley Police, where a credible threat of arson had been received against a person or premises.

The Head of Service Delivery (BFRS) led the Committee through the details relating to Total Emergency Calls Answered and Number of Mobilisations both of which showed an impact from the Covid19 Pandemic. The number of incoming emergency calls reduced by around 12.6% in comparison to the same quarter last year. The reduction in calls was most noticeable in April, where the number of calls received was 21.24% lower than in April 2019. It is believed that this coincides with the reduction in people going to work and, the social and economic impacts of the early part of lockdown. The table detailing the Emergency calls answered within 5 and 10 seconds demonstrates from the point when the call comes into control and, how effectively those calls are handled to enable the necessary action to be taken by Fire and Rescue Services. The Committee noted that, over quarter 1 all calls were answered within the stated target period and TVFCS are comfortably within acceptable limits. The report included a narrative that no more than 3% of calls received should ring for more than 10 seconds with a second, more demanding, target that no more than 7% of calls should ring for longer than 5 seconds. The Head of Service Delivery (BFRS) turned the targets into tangibles by advising that, should members of the public ring in to Control they can expect calls to be answered within 10 seconds on 97% of occasions and this has been comfortably achieved over this period. The report also included a table to reflect the % occasions where time to alert a station is within 90 seconds of the emergency call being answered. Call handling times are expected to increase slightly during the summer months, as more calls to outdoor locations are received which involve extended questioning of the caller and the use of location identification technology to ensure that the most appropriate resources are mobilised. Whilst some variance was expected in this area, the performance in June fell by more than would normally be anticipated. Analysis of the data had shown the reduction in commercial activity with workforces working from home, being furloughed or, not being in the normal working location meant that the procedures whereby Control would normally gain information from representatives on site had lowered meaning the work involved for identifying the call has changed. It is believed these are significant factors affecting the call handling time over the recent period. The Committee were mindful that the call challenge procedure operated by Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire to a greater extent than Buckinghamshire at this time also had a corresponding impact. As a result of the recent HMICFRS report, a joint evaluation between the three Services in to the effectiveness of the current response arrangements to Automatic fire alarms is being undertaken and, the Head of Service Delivery (BFRS) will report back in the next performance

report on whether any further changes are seen as a result of behaviours and commercial activity during the lockdown period. The Senior Responsible Officers advised Committee that the table showing the alerts to incidents types demonstrates where the workings of the Control takes' best effect. In terms of alerts in primary fires, secondary fires and road traffic collisions all targets are within acceptable limits.

The resilience arrangements for staffing and, the systems were discussed. On 4<sup>th</sup> June 2020 a business resilience exercise had taken place which simulated a scenario where TVFCS calls needed to be diverted to the Staffordshire & West Midlands Fire Control (S&WMFC). During the exercise, S&WMFC staff were able to correctly identify and notify the appropriate Thames Valley Resources for each call passed to them using the agreed resilient 'fall back' systems and our existing resilience arrangements remain in place. In the current circumstances, the Head of Service Delivery (BFRS) advised that TVFCS were working with Staffordshire & West Midlands Fire Control (S&WMFC) to support their resilience arrangements along with testing our own showing that the arrangements work in both directions.

The Head of Service Delivery (BFRS) again reiterated the success of the introduction of the Blue Light Hub' becoming fully operational and formally recognised the work by Capita alongside TVFCS staff and colleagues to make the changes to the Command & Control platform required to support this change. It was reported that following go-live in June 2020, no major issues had occurred with mobilisation or support to the public which is testimony to the work undertaken during the transition period.

In a change to previous reporting, the financial summary will still be provided Appendix B however; in terms of a summary the Head of Service Delivery (BFRS) drew the Committee's attention to the current projection which was a favourably variance of 2.2% equating to an underspend of approx. £50,000. This financial position is kept under regular review and, will continue to be reported against.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, thanked the Head of Service Delivery (BFRS) for the re-revised style of the report which she felt was more focussed and an improved style. The Chairman also congratulated the Senior Responsible Officers on the good outcome of the business resilience exercise. On behalf of the Joint Committee, the Chairman requested that a letter be sent to everyone in the Control Room thanking them for their exemplary performance during, what has been a really testing time. The Committee supported this recommendation.

Cllr Gray reiterated how much easier the new style report was to read and understand and went on to ask if the delay in response times over 10 seconds occurred at any specific time of the day. The Head of Service Delivery (BFRS) advised that this was difficult to determine as the Fire Control Service is a 24/7 operation therefore; the stations within are permanently staffed and, he suggested that the delay is more a symptom of the incident rather than Control as an operation. The Head of Service Delivery (BFRS) will come back to a future meeting with examples of when there is an excess of 10 seconds. Cllr

**SRO's to write to Control Staff on behalf of the Joint Committee.**

**DN to explore examples on excess of 10 seconds.**

Gray went on to ask if the Control Room had received calls over the lockdown period from people who had just wanted someone to talk to rather than being malicious calls. The Head of Service Delivery (BFRS) advised that he would ask the Group Manager TVFCS to review this and bring back any examples to a future meeting.

**DN to review calls into Control and report back.**

Cllr Ross supported the positive feedback on the style of the report and, the performance of the Control Room. Cllr Ross stated that he was particularly interested to see the new form of staff development and, how that is progressing. He went on to ask whether the target of 80% was realistic for time of alerts to Stations as the Committee would not want to prompt Control to send Crews out when they do not have enough information pulled together however; we want Crews to be mobilised as soon as possible. The Head of Service Delivery (BFRS) suggested a review of the target may be more appropriate when the impact of the current arrangements around Covid19 can be seen as this will provide a, greater sense on how the public are affected and how well we are able to adapt our arrangements to the information the public are able to provide. The Head of Service Delivery (BFRS) also suggested that waiting for the outcome of the Automatic Fire Alarms review would also be prudent as the level of call challenge on the caller may be placing an unrealistic pressure on that target which may be the point where we would have the evidence to review the target. The Head of Service Delivery (BFRS) will bring a recommendation to the Committee once the review has been completed which will enable an evidence-based decision to be taken using scrutiny and judgement.

**DN to bring back to a future meeting.**

Cllr Hopkins thanked the Head of Service Delivery (BFRS) for a very understandable report and asked about the performance of Capita in terms of the launch of the Blue Light Hub and, also over the recent challenging time in terms of partner and supplier. The Head of Service Delivery (BFRS) advised that the support of Capita during the resilience arrangements, launch of the hub and over the Covid19 period had, not only been satisfactory but, on many occasions went over and above what was expected at this time. The Area Manager (RBFCS) advised that Capita had put in place working arrangements over the Covid19 period and notified on how they would operate with our access restrictions should there have been any issues. The Area Manager (RBFCS) went on to advise that he was not aware of any particular issues in terms of the standard of service and our maintenance contract.

RESOLVED –

That the contents of the report be noted.

## **09. TVFCS Members Workshop Report**

On 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020, a Joint Committee Members Workshop had been held to consider a range of items regarding the future direction and development of the Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) and the ongoing arrangements with Capita. At the workshop, Members had agreed that the Committee meetings would take place as scheduled for July, September and

December 2020. Moving into 2021 Committee meetings would take place in July for the annual reporting and, December to set the budget for the coming year. In March and September Workshops would take place which would start to take Members through the arrangements expected over the coming period affecting Control. These Workshops could be turned in to Committee meetings if required. The Head of Service Delivery (BFRS) advised that the Senior Responsible Officers, Group Manager TVFCS and, colleagues in Control are looking to obtain a forward sense of some of the substantive issues coming over the next two years and, thinking about the first workshop in March 2021. There will be a few issues to take Members through in terms of the Control system replacement with a report due from Capita on what that might like. The presentation from the Members Workshop had been included in the agenda pack for information.

The Chairman advised that she felt that the Members Workshop had gone very well in terms of being a relaxed meeting with no formal agenda allowing it to flow well. There were no further questions or comments made and, the Chairman advised that she looked forward to the second workshop taking place in March 2021.

RESOLVED –

That the Joint Committee agreed the contents of the report as an accurate record of the business conducted at the workshop.

#### **10. EMERGENCY SERVICES MOBILE COMMUNICATION PROGRAMME (ESMCP) UPDATE**

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (RBFRS) delivered a presentation to the Committee relating to the Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme (ESMCP) which is the national programme within the Home Office to deliver the emergency services network (ESN). ESN will replace the current Airwave network with a wireless coverage data network enabling handheld, vehicle and airborne devices to communicate with each other and, with a Control Room such as TVFCS. The programme is intended to deliver an end-to-end solution that incorporates all necessary access gateways, the protocols for operation and, the services to make sure the network, systems and devices are supported. The fundamental element of ESN technology is, that it is based on the 4G mobile data network with the ESN coverage being provided by EE which is a BT company. ESN is going to provide talk-groups for emergency services access only essentially through that network with priority of calling and pre-empting function ahead of other users on the network. There will also be a simulated push-to-talk capability on the devices that are used. Airwave was established in 2000 and went live in 2004 meaning that the infrastructure is ageing and was due for decommission in 2019 when, due to the original transition plan, ESN was due to have been in place. With the delay that has occurred Airwave has been extended requiring significant investment indicated at approximately £1 million per day by the programme meaning that it remains resilient however; this is at significant expense in its own right compared to the comparable daily costs of the ESN system when it is operational. Moving to

ESN avoids the costs of replicating masts and network links and benefits from enhancement of the future 4g network. Alongside this ESN offers potential additional capabilities through mobile broadband alongside enhanced service capabilities which would be used for video and body work cameras. A product pathway is available and, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (RBFRS) delivered a very high overview within the presentation on Assure, which is the testing of the coverage across the country and, Connect and Connect+ which provides the voice and data capability which is in trial in some services. Direct provides the connection of voice and data with Control rooms and this has been tested in recent weeks. Prime offers the finished product but without the full encryption however; this is suitable for Fire and Rescue Service transition. Prime+ offers a higher level of encryption but is currently seen as a need for Police colleagues rather than Fire or Ambulance Services.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (RBFRS) advised that there has been a clear and tangible increase in activity this quarter with the intent to accelerate progress. The Covid19 impact has been minimal and the full business case is expected to achieve full ministerial approval in February 2021. It continues to be a point of note, including at the Public Accounts Committee this month, that the business case is not signed off though the programme continues to drive forward. The newly appointed National Programme Director, John Black attended a recent Fire Group Meeting and articulated his view that fundamentally ESN is the right solution with the business case for change not being in doubt. In essence, sustaining the Airwave system adds costs in the region of £1 million per day to the programme whilst post-delivery ESN is fundamentally a cheaper option however; it does remain unclear what the cost implications will be for the Fire and Rescue Service post ESN delivering and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (RBFRS) advised that there is still a push to understand that.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (RBFRS) advised that everyone is still working to the National Programme current timeline which is showing the final transition of all emergency services to ESN by November 2024 with the Fire Sector being one of the later services to transition. There is a desire in the national programme to bring this transition date forward to mid-2023 for the financial reasons raised earlier in the presentation. Whilst supportive of transition taking place earlier, the fire sector has communicated that the ESN must safely meet the requirements. The biggest issue in the current timeline of 2024 is that there is no contingency in the plan however; it had been reassuring that the new Programme Director recognised this as an unrealistic position and, regionally it has been noted that there has been some slippage in the current path of activities and, when combined with the lack of contingency, this does leave some relatively low confidence with the plan. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (RBFRS) caveated this with the recognition that the new Programme Directors' intent is to deliver a base product as soon as practicable but with the clear view that it must be fit for purpose being the primary success factor. Whilst the sector, are broadly supportive of this like for like replacement as a priority to get the product live it does leave some concern that the potential added value benefits, use of tools and technology may not be so easily realised after delivery of the base product. The view of the Programme Director is that, the programme is now in the proving stage with the core

technology available. His intent is to get the first release and base capability in place to replace Airwave and, he would like the programme to work with the user community to establish confidence, focus, reality and collaboration. The lead for the coverage assurance testing is from Oxfordshire working collaboratively within the South East Region along with colleagues in the Police thus making the best use of our resources. Each user organisation has been issued with a small number of handheld devices e.g. vehicles checking devices. The Direct project has been successfully trialled in Merseyside this summer with delivery of the prime product on track for mid-2021. With reference to the deployment planning, the programme is updating deployment plans and Services have been asked to update a return for the end September 2020 providing a useful opportunity to review and underpin the assumptions. Our core plan assumption for the Thames Valley remains for a transition no sooner than 6 months after the service goes live but no later than 12 months before Airwave turns off. Based on current planning our window of transition appears to be between Q1 of 2022 and Q4 of 2023. Contingency dates may need to change should the end date of the programme be brought forward. Additional detail regarding the handheld and fixed vehicles device are beginning to emerge from the programme and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (RBFRS) gave an overview of the devices and equipment to the Committee. Indicative costs are indicated to be slightly higher than current Airwave devices however; there are alternative providers already coming through which could increase options and, have implications on costs.

The ESN Regional Grant Funding is managed by Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority for the Region with individual Service Grant Funding managed locally. Programme spend is agreed through a short business case process and, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (RBFRS) advised that the regional grant funding for 2020/21 was £236,000 - money from the programme covers this. The funding for the TVFCS ESN upgrades and capabilities is held by Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and to date all costs have been met by the programme. As expected with any system change, there are internal costs associated with key staff committing time to support the work. As part of the full business case there has been some articulation from the programme of their assessment of core and non-core costs. This is important as it is the non-core costs which will fall to user organisations such as ourselves. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (RBFRS) advised that he expected to have costs associated with the system however; they must be realistic, foreseeable and manageable. The programmes' assumptions on these costs has been queried at a national level through the Fire Customer Group with the question being taken forward. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (RBFRS) advised that the programme had recently appointed assurance partners from across the three Emergency Services with the Fire Sector being represented by Merseyside and West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Services. The purpose of the partners is for them to work alongside the programme to support the end-to-end build, testing and deployment of the network. There will be an opportunity in the future to engage through scenario testing and, it was suggested that this may be an area the Thames Valley would wish to engage in. Engagement is also taking place to validate deployment and service viability for on-boarding ESN such as IT health checks and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (RBFRS) confirmed that the TVFCS is ahead of the curve with the work that is being undertaken.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (RBFRS) advised the Committee on the key points for TVFCS and the Joint Committee at this time. The primary upgrades and DNSP connection were completed in 2018 with subsequent changes by the programme requiring work from Capita. Current indications are that these are likely to take place in Summer 2021 and, will be grant funded by the programme. The timeline will be monitored to ensure that the upgrade can be managed around other TVFCS developments. The current intention is to complete the transition to ESN before any future major Control Room replacement process.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (RBFRS) stated that it was important to note that Airwave continues to operate without any performance issues and the programme has already committed to maintaining the system until such time as ESN is in place. It is the costs associated that are driving the programme to have as early adoption of the new system as possible. In light of, the given timeline for the full business case, meetings and workshop, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (RBFRS) proposed that the next update to Committee should take place as part of the workshop in March 2021.

The Chairman thanked the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (RBFRS) for a superb presentation and, asked that it be shared with the Committee for reference. The Chairman expressed some disappointment that the Fire Sector was being shown as one of the latest services to transition and, also questioned the statement on 'low confidence in the plan'. The Chairman asked why, as a blue light service, Fire was being considered not important. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (RBFRS) advised that the confidence in the plan is not intended to indicate anything other than, it continues to be a developing plan. The programme has high confidence with the dates published however; the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (RBFRS) suggested that it would be remiss of him not to look at this in context of a programme that should have been delivered in 2019. Independent reviews to date have highlighted the low engagement of the national programme with the user organisations and, this is being addressed by the new Programme Director. With reference to the transition date for the Fire Sector, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (RBFRS) advised this was less of a concern for him and was more around when organisations may want to transition. The exact timelines for this still need to be worked through and the deployment exercise being undertaken to understand when we would want to transition is very helpful as it allows us to advise on our preference. He assured the Committee that the transition would take place in the timelines that work for us. This statement was welcomed by the Chairman.

Cllr Hopkins supported that this was core secure infrastructure in essence, but highlighted that the timeline for delivery is another 4 years hence and, with the speed of technology and development such as artificial intelligence, the reliance on 4G etc. asked whether this delivery would ever happen as the robustness of the core infrastructure will need to keep pace. Cllr Hopkins further sought reassurance that the development aspect was working alongside the developing applications and, with the Control Room technologies. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (RBFRS) advised that the current Airwave system is based on a Tetra Bespoke system and is very expensive as

**SF to share presentation with the Committee.**

it is designed on the requirements for use by emergency services. The move to a 4G based network will provide much greater legacy advantage with evolving technology. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (RBFRS) suggested that there is a need to be open minded that, whilst, ESN affords us opportunity with technology use, it does not mean that that it is the only way to access technology directly. The Area Manager (RBFRS) stated that the question from Cllr Hopkins highlighted the complexity being dealt with. ESN is one part of an overall jigsaw puzzle that fits around Control and, there are some other aspects that will be taken through to the Workshop in March 2021 for further discussion. The Area Manager (RBFRS) went on to say that ESN is one part that will play out over the next 4 years and, that the Joint Co-Ordination Group will also be looking at the Control replacement as well as exploring the next generation of 999 systems. The Workshop taking place in March 2021 will consider how all, of these elements will come together and, he advised that whilst there are some exciting opportunities there is also a level of realism of the complexities involved.

Cllr Hopkins stated that whilst he was attending the Joint Committee meeting as a substitute, he would welcome attending the Workshop as either an Observer or participant if that were possible. The Chairman advised that this would be discussed outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED –

That the contents of the presentation on the ESMCP and the delivery of the ESN were noted.

#### **11. FORWARD PLAN**

It was agreed that ESMCP would be moved from the December meeting to the March workshop.

RESOLVED –

That the Forward Plan be updated.

#### **14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Monday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020 at 2:00 pm.

(The Chairman closed the meeting at 3.15 pm)

# Agenda Item 8

## THAMES VALLEY FIRE CONTROL SERVICE



<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>TVFCS BUDGET 2021/22</b>
<b>PRESENTED TO:</b>	<b>JOINT COMMITTEE</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	<b>14 DECEMBER 2020</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>CONOR BYRNE, HEAD OF FINANCE &amp; PROCUREMENT, RBFRS</b>
<b>EXEMPT INFORMATION</b>	<b>NONE</b>
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>AGREE</b>

### 1. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1 To provide Joint Committee with the proposed budget for Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) for the 2021/22 financial year.

### 2. **RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 **Agree** the proposed TVFCS revenue budget for 2021/22 as detailed in **Appendix A**.

2.2 **Agree** a contingency budget allocation of £150,000 which would provide an upper limit of expenditure without further Authority approval.

2.3 **Agree** to delegate authority to the three CFOs (unanimous decision required) for any unplanned expenditure between £10,000 and £150,000.

2.4 **Agree** to set aside £150,000 (£50,000 from each partner) in 2021/22 towards capital replacement costs.

2.5 **Recommend** to their respective Authorities the TVFCS budget for the financial year 2021/22 and the individual Authority contributions to this budget.

### 3. **REPORT**

- 3.1 The proposed TVFCS Revenue Budget for 2021/22 is detailed in **Appendix A** and shows a total budget of £2,410,447 which is an increase of 2.35%.
- 3.2 Based on the Government's announcement of a public sector pay freeze, no general pay award has been built into the 2021/22 Budget. Nevertheless, employment costs have been budgeted to rise by 2.1% during the 2021/22 financial year based on the fact that a number of staff are forecast to move from the development pay rate onto the fully competent rate for their role. For the Firefighter (Control) role the pay increase is 28% on achieving competence. The pay increases associated with achieving role competence are lower for Supervisory and Middle Management roles but still have an impact on the overall cost of staff.
- 3.3 Recharges are set each year for TVFCS to cover corporate costs. The scale of the recharges has been amended within the proposals to reflect the expected cost to provide the corporate functions in 2021/22.
- 3.4 The recharge in relation to HR and Learning and Development is increasing by 10.96% to reflect the costs of providing Benenden health cover to staff as well as additional support around EDI and training.
- 3.5 The recharge for Liability Insurance has increased by £3,825. RBFA has recently renewed its insurance arrangements with the liability element increasing by £51,000 due to recent events and the hardening of the market.
- 3.6 It is expected that activity associated with IT hardware and software refresh, as well as adding capabilities and functionality to the installed Vision environment, will lead to increased resourcing requirements in future years from RBFRS ICT on a project support basis. The annual recharge is based on steady state support modelling and so it is likely that RBFRS ICT recharges will increase commensurately with forecast resourcing requirement in subsequent years. When a steady state support environment is reached, the recharge will, of course be modified to reflect actual resource commitments. Resourcing requirements will be forecast based on TVFCS forward looking planning assumptions in full consultation with, and with the agreement of TVFCS management.
- 3.7 Unicorn network costs have risen by 7.75% as a result of BT identifying a historic issue where they have not been billing TVFCS for the network connection between Calcot and Stocklake. No payments are being sought from BT in respect of previous years, but the correct cost for this network link will be billed going forward.
- 3.8 The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) has been produced and included as **Appendix B**. This reflects potential budget pressures or cost reductions in the medium term, staff development expectations and future year salary awards which from 2022/23 have been shown as 1% per annum. All other lines have been inflated at a rate of 2% per annum, which reflects the UK Governments target inflation rate. It is hoped that as we move into 2021/22, the longer-term funding position for the fire sector will become clearer which

in turn will allow more detailed work to be undertaken on the MTFP to ensure alignment with the funding envelope.

- 3.9 It is proposed in paragraph 2.4 that each partner continues to set aside £50,000 each financial year towards capital replacement costs. The fund currently has in excess of £1.75m, including the contributions made by partners in 2020/21. Plans for a mini hardware refresh during 2021/22 are progressing with a Members' workshop scheduled for March 2021. Costs and detailed specifications are currently being worked on but estimates to date suggest a cost of around £350,000. Looking further ahead, once there is more clarity on ESN, it will be necessary to commission a piece of work in preparation for a tender for a complete system refresh.
- 3.10 The budget papers presented have been produced and developed in collaboration with the lead contact for each respective partner.

#### **4. COMPLIANCE WITH THE TVFCS PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

- 4.1 This report complies with the TVFCS Steady State Legal Agreement.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 With employment costs accounting for just over 75% of the total proposed budget, financial performance and budget requirements are largely controlled by factors not directly determined locally; pay awards, national insurance costs and LGPS pension contributions.

#### **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 In accordance with Schedule 7, clause 12.1 of the legal agreement, any underspend will be reimbursed to partners in accordance with the cost apportionment model.
- 6.2 The 2021/22 budget complies with statutory regulations.

#### **7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

#### **8. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Other than the issues identified above, there are no additional risk implications arising from this report.

## **9. CONTRIBUTION TO SERVICE AIMS**

- 9.1 The Committee provides oversight on behalf of the three Authorities of the performance of TVFCS fulfilling their statutory duty to make arrangements for dealing with calls for help and summoning personnel (Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004).

## **10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION**

- 10.1 Simon Harris, TVFCS Group Manager
- 10.2 Joint Co-ordination Group, 16 November 2020
- 10.3 Senior Leadership Team, Royal Berkshire FRS, 24 November 2020
- 10.4 Lead Finance contacts at each respective partner

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 Minutes of the TVFCS Joint Committee meeting 9 December 2019

## **12. APPENDICES**

- 12.1 Appendix A: TVFCS Revenue Budget 2021/22
- 12.2 Appendix B: TVFCS Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 – 2023/24

## **13. CONTACT DETAILS**

- 13.1 Ryan Maslen, Deputy Head of Finance and Procurement, RBFRS

<b>Appendix A</b>			
<b>TVFCS Budget</b>			
	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>Movement</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Staff</b>			
Employment Costs	1,789,804	1,753,009	36,795
Mileage and Subsistence	7,000	7,000	0
Uniforms	0	3,000	-3,000
Training	1,000	750	250
Recruitment	300	300	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>1,798,104</b>	<b>1,764,059</b>	<b>34,045</b>
<b>Corporate</b>			
Facilities	99,184	98,184	1,000
Finance & Procurement	23,289	22,722	567
HR and Learning and Development	81,076	73,069	8,007
ICT	93,818	91,531	2,287
Liability Insurance	10,924	7,099	3,825
Management	16,052	15,660	392
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>324,343</b>	<b>308,265</b>	<b>16,078</b>
<b>Other</b>			
Equipment purchases & Maintenance	5,500	5,500	0
OFRS Costs (Includes Secondary Control Airwave Rental)	44,395	42,135	2,260
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>49,895</b>	<b>47,635</b>	<b>2,260</b>
<b>Technology</b>			
Capita Mobs System (maint)	70,276	69,212	1,064
DS3000 (for primary and secondary) ICCS	85,356	87,195	-1,839
Charges for Unicorn network and telephony rental	53,343	49,506	3,837
Software Maintenance	715	700	15
EISEC Calcot (999 caller location)	9,000	9,000	0
Smart services to switch 999 lines to secondary control / elsewhere	17,000	17,342	-342
Airwave rental ( SAN I ,B ) ( Primary Only)	14,315	14,100	215
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>250,005</b>	<b>247,055</b>	<b>2,950</b>
<b>Total Budgeted Expenditure</b>	<b>2,422,347</b>	<b>2,367,014</b>	<b>55,333</b>
<b>Income</b>			
Alarm Receiving Contract Centre	-11,900	-11,900	0
<b>Total Budgeted Income</b>	<b>-11,900</b>	<b>-11,900</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>2,410,447</b>	<b>2,355,114</b>	<b>55,333</b>

Contingency	150,000	150,000
<b>Upper limit of TVFCS expenditure without further FA approval</b>	<b>2,560,447</b>	<b>2,505,114</b>

<b>Authority:</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>Difference</b>
RBFRS (37.8%)	911,149	890,233	20,916
OXFRS (29.5%)	711,082	694,759	16,323
BFRS (32.7%)	788,216	770,122	18,094
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,410,447</b>	<b>2,355,114</b>	<b>55,333</b>

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<b>Appendix B</b>			
<b>TVFCS Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 to 2023/24</b>			
	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Staff</b>			
Employment Costs	1,789,804	1,807,702	1,825,779
Mileage and Subsistence	7,000	7,140	7,283
Uniforms	0	0	0
Training	1,000	1,020	1,040
Recruitment	300	306	312
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>1,798,104</b>	<b>1,816,168</b>	<b>1,834,414</b>
<b>Corporate</b>			
Facilities	99,184	101,168	103,191
Finance & Procurement	23,289	23,755	24,230
HR and Learning and Development	81,076	82,698	84,351
ICT	93,818	95,694	97,608
Liability Insurance	10,924	11,142	11,365
Management	16,052	16,373	16,701
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>324,343</b>	<b>330,830</b>	<b>337,446</b>
<b>Other</b>			
Equipment purchases & Maintenance	5,500	5,610	5,722
OFRS Costs	44,395	45,283	46,189
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>49,895</b>	<b>50,893</b>	<b>51,911</b>
<b>Technology</b>			
Capita Mobs System (maint)	70,276	71,682	73,115
DS3000 (for primary and secondary) ICCS	85,356	87,063	88,804
Charges for Unicorn network and telephony rental	53,343	54,410	55,498
Software Maintenance	715	729	744
EISEC Calcot (999 caller location)	9,000	9,180	9,364
Smart services to switch 999 lines elsewhere	17,000	17,340	17,687
Airwave rental ( SAN I ,B ) ( Primary,secondary ) (7+8)	14,315	14,601	14,893
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>250,005</b>	<b>255,005</b>	<b>260,105</b>
<b>Total Budgeted Expenditure</b>	<b>2,422,347</b>	<b>2,452,896</b>	<b>2,483,877</b>
<b>Income</b>			
Alarm Receiving Contract Centre	-11,900	-12,138	-12,381
<b>Total Budgeted Income</b>	<b>-11,900</b>	<b>-12,138</b>	<b>-12,381</b>
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>2,410,447</b>	<b>2,440,758</b>	<b>2,471,496</b>
Contingency	150,000	150,000	150,000
<b>Upper limit of TVFCS expenditure</b>	<b>2,560,447</b>	<b>2,590,758</b>	<b>2,621,496</b>

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# Thames Valley Fire Control Service



## Joint Committee Performance Report (Quarter 2 2020/21)



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## Introduction

The Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) performance report presents information on the performance of the joint control room.

This is to provide structure and governance that enables TVFCS to measure, monitor and manage outputs and outcomes in a timely manner, allowing us to respond and make informed decisions to ensure that our statutory and partnership obligations are successfully delivered.

The aim of this report is to share how TVFCS has performed over the previous three months, offer explanation, analysis and mitigation for target outcomes, and to suggest positive means of carrying effective performance into the future.

### Key to Icons and Colours

	Target exceeded by more than 10%
	Target met or exceeded by up to 10%
	Target missed by up to 10%
	Target missed by more than 10%
	NA or data accuracy issues affect confidence in reporting



## Operational Context

During the second quarter of 2020/21, TVFCS activity has continued to be shaped by the national response to the COVID19 pandemic. The focus has continued to be on safeguarding the health and wellbeing of TVFCS staff, whilst maintaining a first class service for our Fire & Rescue Services and our communities.

The relaxation of the government's COVID restrictions in July and August, allowed staff to take planned holidays and resume other activities. Whilst this proved a welcome respite for staff and had positive effects on their health and wellbeing, a number of challenges were posed in maintaining crewing levels caused by the requirement for self-isolation, quarantine and the normal seasonal fluctuations in sickness absence. This created an additional burden on the TVFCS management team in ensuring crewing levels were maintained.

The reduction in demand on TVFCS seen in Q1 has continued during Q2, in terms of both calls received and consequent resource mobilisations compared with the equivalent period in 2019/20 and 2018/19. This reduction is believed to be linked to the societal and behavioural changes resulting from the response to COVID19, the consequent impacts on the number of journeys made and lower levels of economic activity. Anecdotally, TVFCS staff are reporting an increase in emergency calls where mental health and wellbeing is believed to be a factor in the decision to call 999. The majority of these calls require no FRS emergency response but are referred to partner agencies when a safeguarding referral is appropriate.

Two weather events impacted TVFCS during the quarter in August and September, where high volumes of rainfall were experienced over relatively short time periods. More information relating to these events is included in the 'Performance' section of this report.

The Joint Coordination Group and the TVFCS management team, have commenced work to plan, coordinate and resource the significant level of activity which will need to be undertaken over the next two years and beyond. This includes participation in national work streams to implement recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry (focusing on delivering key guidance for staff), the replacement and refresh of the hardware hosting the TVFCS command and control system and systems software, and changes required to facilitate the adoption of the Emergency Services Network.

## TVFCS Joint Committee Performance Report



Early scoping work has indicated a number of challenges around resourcing and capacity for this necessary upgrade work, which will be considered by officers, and presented to members, in the coming months.

Officers received the Capita system upgrade report, outlining the implications of an extension to the existing contract for the command and control system, in August in line with contractual timelines. The Joint Coordination Group are engaging with FRS technical teams, the TVFCS management team, and Capita, over the detail of the report, to ensure clarity on the proposal before bringing recommendations to members. This, and the upgrade programme scoping work, will be a key focus of the planned March 2021 Member workshop.

### Resourcing

Recruitment activity to fill the two vacancies caused by staff resignations during Q1 took place ahead of schedule, with the successful candidates starting their initial training in September and joining their new teams during the last week of October 2020. The number of applicants for these vacancies were considerably higher than has previously been experienced for equivalent roles and several suitable candidates were identified over and above the current requirement. TVFCS managers are exploring how we can engage with these individuals should further vacancies arise.

The TVFCS management team were notified of a forthcoming period of maternity leave, due to commence in December 2020 and are making the necessary arrangements to cover this.

Sickness levels in the second quarter of 2020/21 increased compared with both the previous quarter and the equivalent quarter in 2019/20. Whilst the number of short term sickness absences was consistent with normal seasonal variation, two long term absences had a significant effect on the overall number of days lost in July and August. Of these long term absences, one staff member has now returned to full duties whilst the other has begun a phased return to the workplace whilst they continue to receive appropriate treatment for their health and medical needs. As in previous years, all TVFCS staff will be offered access to a free influenza vaccination during autumn 2020.

## TVFCS Joint Committee Performance Report

Whilst no sickness absence has occurred during the quarter as a result of COVID19 infection, during September a number of staff were required to self-isolate as a result of COVID symptoms. In some of these cases staff would normally have attended work whilst managing mild symptoms but were unable to do so until a COVID test result had been received.

Measure	July 2020	August 2020	September 2020
Short-term Sickness Episodes	4	3	8
Long-term Sickness Episodes*	2	1	0
Total Days lost to Sickness	38	17	24
Average days lost per FTE	0.94	0.42	0.56

\*A sickness episode is considered to be 'long-term' once the individual has been absent for more than 28 days. Maternity leave is not recorded as sickness and is not included in these figures.

### Staff Development

The progress of staff through their development programmes continues following transition to the new Development and Assessment pathways for Control staff. Feedback from staff on the content of the new pathways has been positive and levels of engagement have been high. It is currently anticipated that a number of staff employed as Crew Managers will complete their pathways before the 2020 Christmas holiday. This will provide additional resilience in terms of TVFCS supervisory management crewing, the management team can then begin to prepare these staff for an eventual transition into Watch Manager roles.



Development status

Role	Current staff	Number who have completed role Development pathway	Number in Development	% of Current Staff in Development
Group Manager	1	1	0	0%
Control Manager	1	1	0	0%
Control Training Manager	1	0	1	100%
Watch Manager	4	4	0	0%
Crew Manager	12	4	8	67%
Fire Fighter	20	16	4	20%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>32%</b>

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The information provided in the table shown above relates to those who have successfully completed the development pathway associated with their substantive role, which qualifies the individual to receive the 'competent' rate of pay for that role. All TVFCS staff are assessed for their ability to perform safely in a role before being considered for promotion to that role.



## Prevention and Protection

TVFCS staff have contributed to prevention activity during the quarter through the identification and referral of 30 residents of the Thames Valley with defective smoke alarms in their homes and through the handling of 37 safeguarding notifications. Most issues with defective domestic smoke alarms are as a result of the device's battery becoming flat, causing it to sound. This is often a cause of real concern for our most vulnerable residents, unable to access the device, or unsure what the noise they are hearing is indicating. In these cases, TVFCS will pass the information onto the relevant FRS to facilitate an urgent 'safe and well' visit for the occupant to replace the faulty alarm and provide other safety advice. Safeguarding issues can either be identified by TVFCS when dealing with callers, or following attendance at an address where crews will notify TVFCS that a safeguarding issue has been identified. All TVFCS staff receive regular mandatory training relating to the safeguarding of both adults and children to assist them with this aspect of their work.

TVFCS also deal with notifications from partner agencies, primarily Thames Valley Police, when a credible threat of arson has been received against a person or premises and action needs to be urgently taken. The notifications are then passed to the relevant FRS to be dealt with in line with their respective procedures. TVFCS have only processed 1 notification of this type during Q2 2020/21, however TVFCS have been notified of threats against 19 other addresses during the period which have been passed via other routes. Once suitable inspections have been carried out on at a premises where an arson threat has been received and appropriate measures applied to the premises, TVFCS will normally be asked to take additional actions should a call to the address be received. This may involve increasing the number of appliances sent to the address, or making urgent contact with the Police and other agencies.

## Response

Measure		July 2020	Aug 2020	Sept 2020	Reporting period average	Q2 2019/20 average	Rolling 12 month average
1	Total Emergency calls answered	3029	3579	2912	3173	3543	2819
2	Number of Mobilisations	1761	2009	1753	1841	2101	1712

\*Definitions are available in appendix A

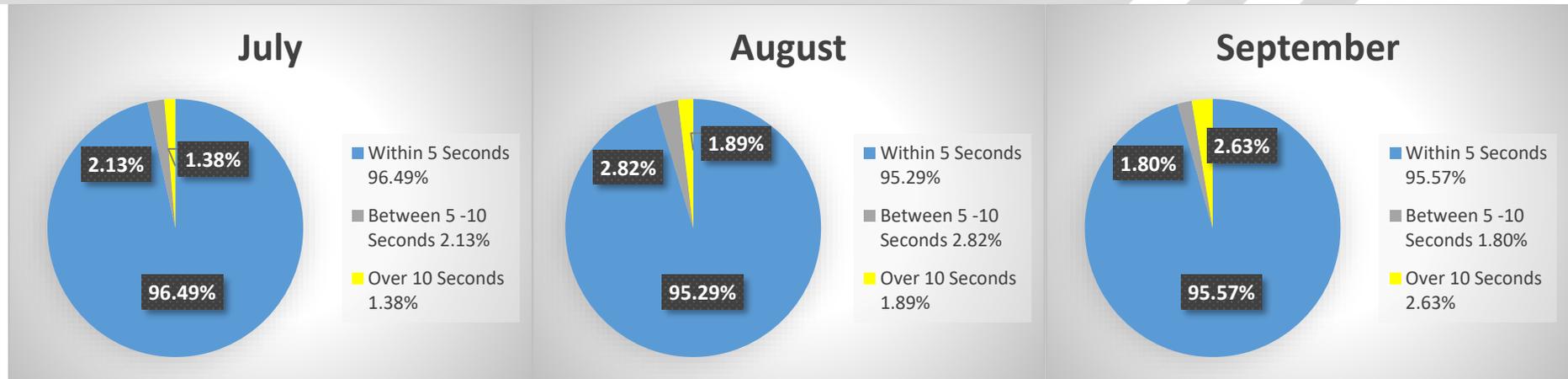
The number of incoming emergency calls handled by TVFCS reduced by 10.44% in comparison with the equivalent quarter in 2019/20. This is consistent with the trend initially observed in Q1 2020/21 which coincided with the restrictions on public movement and commercial activity introduced as part of the national response to COVID19 on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020.

The same pattern is also present in the number of mobilisations which took place during the period with an overall reduction of 12.37% compared with 2019/20.

Measure*		2020/21 Target	July 2020	August 2020	September 2020	Reporting period average	Q2 2019/20	Rolling 12 month average
3	Emergency calls answered within 5 seconds	92%	96.49%	95.29%	95.57%	95.78%	94.23%	96.52%
4	Emergency calls answered within 10 seconds	97%	98.62%	98.11%	97.37%	98.03%	96.74%	98.49%

\*Definitions are available in appendix A

# TVFCS Joint Committee Performance Report



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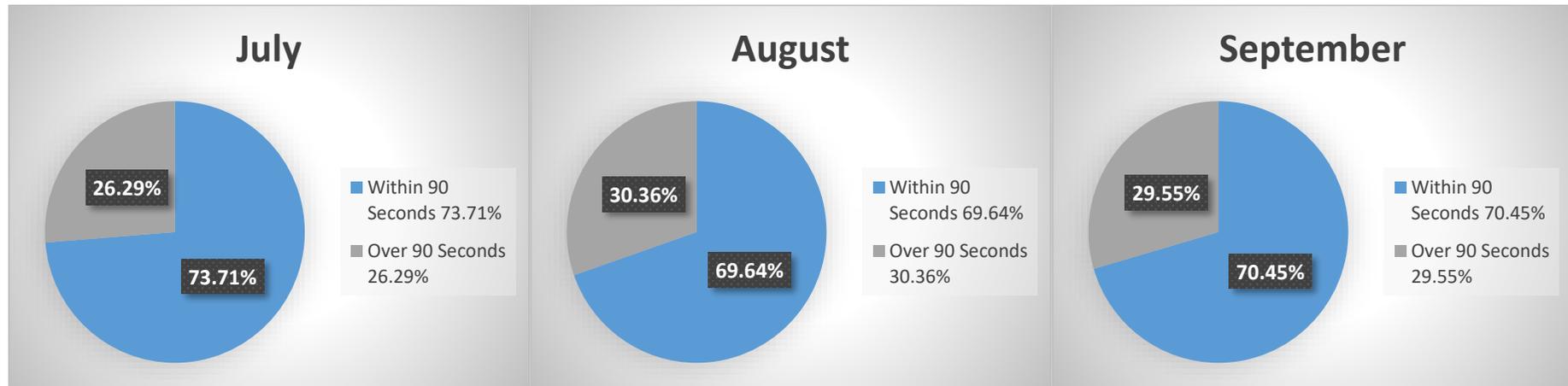
This measure examines call waiting times by looking at the performance of TVFCS staff when answering emergency calls. It sets two targets for how quickly control operators should pick up an emergency call when it comes into the control room. We measure whether a call is picked up within 5 or 10 seconds and the expected performance is that this will be done on 92% or 97% of occasions respectively. Performance against these targets is very good and the targets are routinely exceeded. In reality this means that the majority (97% or more) of all emergency calls that come into TVFCS will be picked in 10 seconds or less. The actual figures for quarter 2 show that, on average, control operators picked up 95.78% of all emergency call within 5 seconds and 98.03% of all emergency calls within 10 seconds.

The small number of occasions where these times are exceeded are associated with periods of higher demand where a number of calls are received simultaneously, this can be as a result of a large number of calls being received in a relatively short period of time, either as a result of single incident which is visible to a large number of people (for example, a fire involving grass on the side of a major road) or as a result of environmental conditions affecting large numbers of people simultaneously, such as exceptionally heavy rainfall causing flooding.

Whilst it can be very difficult to predict the former, TVFCS will normally receive weather warnings ahead of severe weather allowing plans to be made to match resourcing to anticipate demand. During the recent quarter TVFCS experienced two heavy rainfall events causing widespread flooding. Due to the arrangements made to deal with these events, the impact on the time taken to answer calls within 5 and 10 seconds was marginal, with performance falling by only 0.44% and 0.08% respectively compared with the previous quarter.

# TVFCS Joint Committee Performance Report

Measure*		2020/21 Target	July 2020	Aug 2020	Sept 2020	Reporting Period Average	Q2 2019/20	Rolling 12 Month Average
5	% occasions where time to alert station is within 90 seconds of the emergency call being answered.	80%	73.71%	69.64%	70.45%	71.27%	74.34%	73.42%



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TVFCS saw an improvement in performance against this measure in July compared with Q1, however performance then declined in August and September. It is expected that call handling times are expected to increase slightly during the summer months, as more calls to outdoor locations are received which involve extended questioning of the caller and the use of location identification technology to ensure that the most appropriate resources are mobilised, however the drop in performance in August and September was more pronounced than anticipated. Analysis of the data and interviews conducted with Control room staff indicate that difficulties that TVFCS continue to experience difficulties when handling calls relating to alarms in Industrial, Commercial, Retail and Public Assembly premises. The call challenge procedure operated by TVFCS on behalf of OFRS and RBFRS for these premises requires TVFCS to contact the premises to ascertain whether the alarm can be confirmed as 'false' before mobilising a response. The changes to the occupation of these premises as a result of COVID19 has meant that it has been more difficult to contact responsible persons on site to carry out the required checks before a mobilisation takes place.

The heavy rainfall events experienced during August and September have also had an impact on this measure. Where heavy rainfall and consequent flooding occurs, high volumes of calls are routed into TVFCS. Extended call questioning then needs to be applied to these calls to ensure that the situation being reported is one where the FRS are able to render assistance and that FRS operational resources are prioritised to attend incidents where life and property are at immediate risk. This leads to an extension in the time required to capture the information needed to triage calls prior to a resource being allocated to attend.

During the quarter, TVFCS successfully challenged 904 emergency calls. In addition to calls to alarms where FRS attendance is not required in Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire, this figure also includes a large number of calls to other incident types where, through extended questioning of the caller, it is identified that an agency other than the Fire & Rescue Service is more appropriate to provide the assistance that the caller requires. Whilst this call challenge process can lead to extended call handling times, it is a vital aspect of the overall response strategy of the FRS as it preserves the availability of resources to attend incidents where life and property are threatened and simultaneously reduces the risk posed to the public and firefighters when responding to incidents under 'blue light' conditions. The increase in the number of calls challenged in Q2 compared with Q1 was predominantly a result of the number of flooding calls received during the heavy rainfall events mentioned elsewhere in this report, where it was determined that the FRS was not the most appropriate agency to assist.

Measure		2020/21 Target	July 2020	Aug 2020	Sept 2020	Reporting period average	Q2 2019/20	Rolling 12 month average
6	Average time to alert station in seconds – Primary Fires	N/A	69	67	70	69	76	66
7	Average Time to alert station in seconds – Secondary Fires	N/A	88	77	89	84	100	74
9	Average time to alert station in seconds – Road Traffic Collisions	N/A	82	91	93	89	80	85

\*Definitions are available in appendix A

## TVFCS Joint Committee Performance Report

The average time taken to alert a station following a call being answered, where a mobilisation required, is a useful measure to determine how effectively Control staff are able to handle calls. The incident types included in this reporting measure are those which are most often dealt with by the Control room with the potential to involve a threat to life and/or damage to property. On average, TVFCS staff take 90 seconds or less to handle these types of calls, further evidencing their role in supporting the performance of the three FRS' against their Integrated Risk Management Plans and in protecting communities across the Thames Valley.

Primary fires are typically incidents which pose a higher risk to life and property, as they generally relate to fires occurring within buildings. Throughout the period, TVFCS have consistently mobilised to these incidents within 90 seconds and a notable improvement compared with the equivalent period in 2019/20.

Secondary fires tend to be smaller, predominantly outdoor fires, which can often be more difficult to locate than fires involving buildings. It is therefore expected that Control staff will take slightly longer to handle these calls and this is reflected in the statistics for the period. The average speed to mobilise shows an improvement of, on average, 16 seconds compared with the same period in 2019/20.

Road traffic collisions typically take longer to locate than many other incident types, as callers are often not familiar with the area they travelling in, and are often only able to pinpoint their location as being between two notable points, for example roundabouts or other landmarks, which can make identifying a precise location challenging. A large number of calls to road traffic collisions are passed to TVFCS by the Police or Ambulance Service, which means that assistive technology for location identification such as BT Advanced Mobile Location cannot be used. Although the average call handling time for these incidents remains under 90 seconds, an increase can be seen compared with 2019/20. The TVFCS Management team are now analysing data in relation to these types of incident with a view to identifying factors that may be inhibiting performance.



## Resilience

During the Quarter, agreed minimum crewing levels were maintained on 100% of occasions. In order to maintain these crewing levels, evening and weekend cover was provided by members of the Control room management team. Whilst the resilience provided by the TVFCS management team is an important factor in the maintenance of critical staffing levels, there is an impact on the capacity of the team in other areas when this cover is required at night or over a weekend, as the officer concerned then needs to be given compensatory time off during the normal working day, when they would normally be carrying out other work.

TVFCS plans include a quarterly full evacuation exercise, with staff relocating to the secondary control room facility at Kidlington. Due to the restrictions associated with COVID19, the physical evacuation exercises have been suspended and replaced with simulated evacuation exercises.

On September 29th 2020, a business resilience exercise took place simulating an unplanned evacuation to Kidlington, where TVFCS calls needed to be diverted to the Staffordshire & West Midlands Fire Control (S&WMFC). During the exercise, S&WMFC staff correctly identified and notified the appropriate Thames Valley Resources for each call passed to them, using the agreed resilient 'fall back' systems and notionally managed incidents in line with Thames Valley procedure. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID19 pandemic, TVFCS and S&WMFC have been able to maintain their programme of resilience testing, which is now well embedded.

## Data and Intelligence

During Quarter 2 2020/21, all requests for change submitted by the FRS to TVFCS were processed within 5 working days of the request being received. These included requests to amend the Pre-determined attendance for specific locations, add or amend details of newly promoted FRS officers, changes to details relating to fire appliances and changes to FRS procedures carried out by TVFCS staff when dealing with particular types of events.

An information sharing agreement has been signed between the three FRS and Thames Valley Police to facilitate a more effective means of receiving data in relation to some high risk domestic premises. This will improve the speed with which relevant information to assist responding crews is added to the Command & Control system.

A number of requests for information to assist with investigations have been received from Thames Valley Police during the quarter. These requests are referred to the relevant FRS for approval before being released to ensure all relevant data protection legislation is complied with.

Financial Position

	<b>Total Annual Budget</b>	<b>Actual Expenditure To 30th September 2020</b>	<b>Forecast Outturn at Year End</b>	<b>Variance = Forecast - Annual Budget</b>	<b>Variance %</b>
Staff	1,764,060	836,565	1,730,080	-33,980	-1.76%
Corporate	308,250	154,125	308,250	0	0
Other	35,740	1,219	36,220	480	1.34%
Technology	247,060	-6,091	220,203	-26,857	-10.87%
<b>Total Budgeted Expenditure</b>	<b>2,355,110</b>	<b>985,817</b>	<b>2,294,753</b>	<b>-60,357</b>	<b>-2.56%</b>

## Appendix A

### Performance Measure Definitions

Measure	Description
<b>% of occasions where the time to answer emergency calls is within 5 seconds</b>	This measure uses the time taken from when the Fire Control Room system receives an emergency incoming call alert to the moment they are answered by a TVFCS Operator.
<b>% of occasions where the time to answer emergency calls is within 10 seconds</b>	This measure uses the time taken from when the Fire Control Room system receives an emergency incoming call alert to the moment they are answered by a TVFCS Operator.
<b>% of occasions where time to mobilise is within 90 seconds</b>	This measure is calculated from when emergency calls are answered to when control room staff operate equipment at a station notifying crews that they are required to respond.
<b>Average time to alert station in seconds – Primary Fires</b>	The average number of seconds elapsed between an emergency call being answered and control staff operating equipment at a station notifying crews that they are required to mobilise when responding to primary fires. Primary fires are defined as 'more serious fires that harm people or cause damage to property'
<b>Average time to alert station in seconds – Secondary Fires</b>	The average number of seconds elapsed between an emergency call being answered and control staff operating equipment at a station notifying crews that they are required to mobilise when responding to secondary fires. Secondary fires are defined as 'generally small outdoor fires, not involving people of property'.
<b>Average time to alert station in seconds – Road Traffic Collisions</b>	The average number of seconds elapsed between an emergency call being answered and control staff operating equipment at a station notifying crews that they are required to mobilise when responding to road traffic collisions.



Appendix B  
Budget Summary

TVFCS Budget Monitoring 3 Months to 30th June 2020						
	<i>Total Annual Budget</i>	<i>Actual Expenditure To 30th September 2020</i>	<i>Forecast Outturn at Year End</i>	<i>Variance = Forecast - Annual Budget</i>	<i>Variance %</i>	<i>Commentary</i>
<b>Staff</b>						
Employment Costs	1,753,010	832,340	1,722,092	-30,918	-1.76%	Staff movement during Quarter 1 and the COVID related delay in recruitment have a continued effect on this area of the budget but, as a result of the changes made to TVFCS recruitment process, it has proved possible to recruit slightly earlier in Q2 which has had a positive

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						effect on projected variance.
Mileage and Subsistence	7,000	1,491	4,000	-3,000	-42.86%	COVID19 has meant that the majority of physical meetings, both within the Thames Valley and nationally have either been cancelled or held virtually. This has greatly reduced travelling and associated costs for members of the TVFCS management team.
Uniform Allowances	3,000	1,157	2,314	-686	-22.87%	This expenditure relates to a locally agreed allowance relating to work wear payable to eligible female members of staff. Staff movements have reduced the



						number of staff claiming this allowance. Work is ongoing between the RBFRS SRO, TVFCS Group Manager and the representative body find an alternative way of providing these uniform items, which will remove the need for the allowance to be paid in the future.
Training	750	-172	750		0%	The negative expenditure shown relates to the refund of costs for external training cancelled as a result of COVID19. It is anticipated that the training course which utilise this budget will resume when social distancing measures are relaxed.

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Recruitment	300	1,749	924	624	208.0%	The original budget set was based on the aptitude testing of potential new recruits being carried out by TVFCS and RBFRS staff on site. COVID19 restrictions has meant that this approach has not been possible and testing has had to be moved to online platforms with higher costs. It is anticipated that some of these costs will be recovered via the Central government COVID grant, which is why the anticipated end of year figure is lower than the current expenditure.
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>1,764,060</b>	<b>413,349</b>	<b>1,710,540</b>	<b>-53,250</b>	<b>-3.03%</b>	

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Corporate						
Facilities	98,180	24,545	98,180		0%	
Finance	22,720	5,680	22,720		0%	
HR	73,070	18,268	73,070		0%	
ICT	91,530	22,883	91,530		0%	
Liability and Equipment Insurance	7,090	1,773	7,090		0%	
Management	15,660	3,915	15,660		0%	
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>308,250</b>	<b>77,063</b>	<b>308,250</b>		<b>0%</b>	
Other						
Professional Services and General Equipment Purchase	5,500	1,219	5,980	480	8.73%	Costs for the equipment purchased as part of the COVID response have been recouped, however wear and tear of some items, necessitating replacement means a small

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						overspend against this budget is likely.
OFRS Costs (secondary control facility)	42,140	0	42,140		0%	
TVFCS Alarm Receiving Centre income	-11,900	0	-11,900		0%	
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>35,740</b>	<b>1,219</b>	<b>36,220</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>1.34%</b>	
<b>Technology</b>						
Capita Mobs System (maint)	69,210	-12,449	56,585	-12,625	-18.24%	Payments were received from Capita during Q2, representing credits due for failure to rectify a number of minor faults within the agreed contractual service levels. Due to some internal issues within Capita, TVFCS received credits due for both the 2018/19 financial year and the 2019/20 financial



						<p>year. These credits can be used to obtain services and upgrades from Capita over and above those set out in the contract, with any remaining credits applied to the Capita Maintenance and Support costs to generate an in year efficiency.</p>
DS3000 (for primary and secondary) ICCS	87,200	-14,232	72,968	-14,232	-16.32%	<p>Payments were received from Capita during Q2, representing credits due for failure to rectify a number of minor faults within the agreed contractual service levels. Due to some internal issues within Capita, TVFCS received credits due for both the 2018/19 financial year and the 2019/20 financial</p>

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							year. These credits can be used to obtain services and upgrades from Capita over and above those set out in the contract, with any remaining credits applied to the Capita Maintenance and Support costs to generate an in year efficiency.
Telephony and Network costs.	49,510	16,041	49,510			0%	
Software Maintenance	700	49	700			0%	
EISEC Services (Primary and Secondary Control)	9,000	4,500	9,000			0%	
Smart services to switch 999 lines to secondary control or elsewhere	17,340	0	17,340			0%	
Airwave rental ( SAN I ,B ) ( Primary,secondary ) (7+8)	14,100	0	14,100			0%	

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<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>247,060</b>	<b>-6,091</b>	<b>220,203</b>	<b>-26,857</b>	<b>-10.87%</b>	
<b>Total Budgeted Expenditure</b>	<b>2,355,110</b>	<b>985,817</b>	<b>2,294,753</b>	<b>-60,357</b>	<b>-2.56%</b>	

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ITEM	NEXT REPORTING DATE	FEEDING FROM/TO	RECOMMENDED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	LEAD MEMBER	PART I / II
Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme	14-Jul-21	N/A	note	Steve Foye	N/A	Part I
Quarterly Performance Report/Budget Monitoring	14-Jul-21	N/A	note	Dave Norris/Simon Harris	N/A	Part I
Proposed Budget 2022/23	14-Dec-21	To OCC, BMKFA and RBFA	agree and recommend to OCC, BMKFA and RBFA	Conor Byrne	N/A	Part I
Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme	14-Dec-21	N/A	note	Jim Powell/Simon Harris	N/A	Part I
Quarterly Performance Report/Budget Monitoring	14-Dec-21	N/A	note	Jim Powell/Simon Harris	N/A	Part I

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