

# THAMES VALLEY FIRE CONTROL SERVICE



<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23</b>
<b>PRESENTED TO:</b>	<b>TVFCS JOINT COMMITTEE</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	<b>17<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2023</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>AREA COMMANDER SIMON TUFFLEY</b>
<b>EXEMPT INFORMATION</b>	<b>NOT APPLICABLE</b>
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>TO NOTE</b>

1.1 To provide a high level summary of Thames Valley Fire Control (TVFCS) activity during the year 2022/23.

## **2. RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 That the Joint Committee **NOTE** the annual report

## **3. REPORT**

3.1 An annual report is produced each year by the outgoing Chairman of the TVFCS Joint Committee. In 2022/23, this was Councillor Simon Rouse (BMKFA).

3.2 This report provides a high-level overview of control room activity and any progress made in relation to service plans and performance, including a look at staffing and a summary of the financial position at year-end. Finally, it provides a look forward to 2023/24 and the key areas of work required to continue making improvements to TVFCS on behalf of the three Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services (FRS).

3.3 TVFCS continues to be the flagship of collaboration in the region since going live in April 2015. The control centre handles calls and mobilises resources for the three Thames Valley FRS.

- 3.4 Governance of TVFCS is undertaken by elected Members, two from each contributing authority, who form the TVFCS Joint Committee. Senior Responsible Officers (SRO) from each TV FRS form the Joint Coordinating Group (JCG) and support the control manager to monitor and manage performance, reporting into the Joint Committee.
- 3.5 The service utilises a single employer model with a single mobilising system, which was designed to deliver efficiencies to all three authorities. The service operates a principle of borderless mobilising which ensures the quickest available resource is sent to an incident regardless of the county boundaries.

#### **4. PERFORMANCE**

- 4.1 TVFCS is measured against a set of targets agreed by the JCG and endorsed by the Joint Committee. During the last year, a new set of measures and approach to reporting has been developed by the JCG in response to feedback from Committee members. The new measures offer a broader range of performance metrics than previously reported.
- 4.2 TVFCS has performed well against the existing measure for how quickly calls are answered during the year, with the target exceeded on the majority of occasions.
- 4.3 The measures used to monitor the speed with which TVFCS mobilise fire appliances in response to calls has been reviewed and revised, with new measures agreed that provide more detailed information relating to the types of incidents being reported. This will allow managers and Members to better identify the incidents which require longer call handling times, and plan appropriately.

#### **5. STAFFING**

- 5.1 Staff turnover during the year has been higher than anticipated within TVFCS. This issue has been identified across most Fire Control rooms in the United Kingdom and a NFCC working group has been established to look at improving staff recruitment and retention, which TVFCS are engaged with. The TVFCS SROs and management team are working together to identify local solutions.
- 5.2 Vacancies for Supervisory and Middle Management roles have been filled with internal candidates, demonstrating progress in terms of staff development and succession planning.
- 5.3 Emphasis to support employees back into work following sickness absence during 2022/23 has reduced long-term absences and made maintaining critical staffing levels more manageable, whilst reducing the amount of cover being provided from outside the shift based staff pool.

#### **6. YEAR-END FINANCIAL POSITION**

- 6.1 The budget for TVFCS is set at the December meeting of the Joint Committee each year. The budget for TVFCS for 2022/23 was £2,512,725. At year-end, the actual expenditure was £2,525,365 creating a variance of £12,641 (0.50%) The principal cause being the backdated national pay award agreed in March 2023.

## **7. NOTABLE ACTIVITY**

- 7.1 TVFCS were impacted by the weather conditions which were experienced during the summer of 2022, which led to a significant increase in the number of emergency calls received, and extreme demand being placed on operational resources. Call volumes into TVFCS were 45.53% higher than normal in July 2022, and 70.74% higher than normal in August 2022.
- 7.2 In September, TVFCS were fully involved in the arrangements for the funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. TVFCS staff worked with colleagues from a wide range of partners across the Thames Valley and nationally to ensure that the events associated with the funeral ran smoothly.
- 7.2 Control room National Operational Guidance (N.O.G.) began to be published by the Home Office in early summer 2021. TVFCS has been able to adopt the new Fire Survival Guidance in full, but capacity to adopt other pieces of guidance has been limited. The TVFCS SROs are working with the management team to identify solutions which will release capacity to undertake this work in 2023/24.
- 7.3 The TVFCS SROs and members of the Joint Committee have focused on the need to ensure that TVFCS systems and supporting contracts are suitable for the ongoing needs of the Service in the medium to long-term. The hardware refresh of the TVFCS Command & Control system commenced in Q4 2022/23 and is anticipated to be complete in Q1 2023/24. This will provide TVFCS staff with a hardware solution that will provide improved system performance and stability through to the end of the existing contract.
- 7.4 A refresh of the TVFCS lighting solution was completed in Q1 2022/23 and has been very well received by staff. A reduction of the incidence of migraine headaches amongst Control staff has been noted during the year, which it is believed to be related to the adoption of the new LED lighting.
- 7.5 TVFCS have been engaged with new national arrangements to improve the call handling capacity and resilience of Fire Control rooms. These arrangements were called upon several times during the exceptionally busy summer period with TVFCS able to assist other Control rooms, relieving pressure on the national '999' system

## **8. LOOKING FORWARD**

- 8.1 As previously mentioned, the TVFCS Command & Control system hardware refresh will be completed early in 2023/24. The contract for the Integrated Communication Control System, which processes all incoming and outgoing radio and voice communications, has been extended to align with the contract for the command and control system. As part of this extension, a hardware refresh of this system will also be undertaken, which will improve system performance and enable TVFCS to adopt ESN functionality as it becomes available.
- 8.2 Members of the TVFCS Joint Coordination Group have taken on key roles in the Home Office's Multi Agency Incident Transfer (MAIT) Connect project, which will provide a technological platform allowing Fire Controls in England to securely exchange incident information electronically. The project will complete in Q1 2023/24 and the Joint Coordination Group will then consider the route to adoption for TVFCS.

- 8.3 TVFCS will be looking to deliver a number of changes over the year to align TVFCS working practices with both National Operational Guidance and the newly published Fire Control Standards.
- 8.4 The Joint Coordination Group will continue to progress work to improve the staffing resilience of TVFCS.
- 8.4 Technical work required to implement the new Emergency Services Network is now scheduled to start during 23/24 and will continue over the coming years. This work is coordinated through a regional project structure and the impact on Control room operations will need to be carefully managed by TVFCS managers and will be supported by all three TVFRS.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 None

## **11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 None

## **11. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 None

## **12. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 Risks relating to future activity are captured in the TVFCS risk register and reviewed regularly by the SROs.

## **13. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION**

- 13.1 Chief Fire Officer
- 13.2 Chief Finance Officer

## **14. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 14.1 None

## **15. APPENDICES**

- 15.1 None

## **16. CONTACT DETAILS**

- 16.1 Group Manager Simon Harris [harriss@tvfcs.org.uk](mailto:harriss@tvfcs.org.uk)