

POLICE & CRIME PANEL

20TH NOVEMBER 2020

TVP Estate Collaboration Overview

1. Report Purpose

To update the Police and Crime Panel (PCP) on where Thames Valley Police (TVP) is with estate collaboration with 'Blue Light' and Local Authority partners, achievements to date, and future activity and opportunities.

2. Background

- There is a legal requirement to consider collaboration (Crime & Disorder Act 2017).
- Prior to 2015/16, and following the 2008 financial crisis there was an increasing degree of stated intentions between partners to collaborate and Officer level engagement. The outcomes were generally limited with a few exceptions, notably a number of Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH's) established in 2013/14 and a few TVP Neighbourhood office leases.
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Blue Light estate collaboration was agreed in 2015, although this only covers Fire (all 3 Thames Valley Fire Services) and Police. Engagement by South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) has been sporadic. Activity under the MoU very quickly became 'business as usual' (BAU), with good and constructive relationships at Officer level. An estates update was a standing item in quarterly Blue Light Steering Group meetings.
- From 2016, TVP and the 3 Fire Services (and to a lesser extent SCAS) have all engaged to varying degrees in the 3 county level One Public Estate (OPE) programmes initiated regionally by the Cabinet Office and the Local Government Association (LGA). These have broadened the estates conversation across a wider local partnership base including Councils, Blue Light, LEP, numerous Health Trusts and some central Government departments.
- While this report focusses on Blue Light and Council collaboration, collaboration also occurs at the Town/Parish council level with a number of councils hosting TVP local Neighbourhood offices.
- The scope and scale of potential projects and initiatives since 2015 has broadened significantly, beyond initial "quick wins". All partners have had a period of ongoing estate rationalisation, resulting in future projects becoming more complex and/or challenging to deliver. TVP during the past 5 years has had several intentional temporary pauses in implementing estate plans, arising from the Priority Based Budget (PBB) review, Operating Model, Uplift, COVID and now the Effectiveness and Efficiency review, most of which have impacted to some degree on the pace in progressing collaborative projects
- Post COVID-19 may well give rise to new opportunities, as TVP and all our partners are now considering or developing plans for further estate rationalisation, and/or cost offsetting/income generation, taking advantage of the embedding of greater home/remote working capability.

- The TVP Asset Management Plan (AMP) is refreshed every 2 years; its key annexes addressing the estate disposal programme and future retention strategy for each site, are “live” documents reflecting the fluid nature of estate plans, increasing costs certainty and updated receipts. The 2020 iteration has been delayed due to COVID and the current Effectiveness & Efficiency review, with the expectation from the latter that an expansion of estate rationalisation plans will be needed to address increased budgetary pressures. The expected shift to a more home based working model for a range of functions, and greater ICT capability for operational teams gives rise to the need to re-assess estate requirements (and space use) Force-wide.

3. Current Position

a. **Projects Completed**

The number of situations where TVP are located within partner premises and vice versa fluctuates over time. The current position is reflected in the summary table below, covering a range of facilities from Neighbourhood Police offices, MASH’s, Closed Circuit TV (CCTV) hubs, Police Station (PS) replacements, and general and specialist support facilities. The largest is the Victims First and Witness Care hub office in the Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service (RBF&RS) HQ in Reading (189 sqm). The total is down from a peak of 56 in 2016.

Co-location	Bucks	Berks	Oxon	TOTAL
TVP in Partner sites	7	16	14	37
Partners in TVP sites	4	1	10	15
TOTAL	11	17	24	52

There are also numerous informal arrangements in both scenarios which are not reflected here. This may be a touchdown use of council desks by Local Policing Areas (LPA’s) or specialist health teams’ regular use of Custody Suite, and some LPA, rooms.

b. **Projects in Progress**

The TVP 2018 AMP has 14 extant disposal projects at various stages of development, of which 9 have planned, or in progress, smaller replacement solutions involving partner premises. 6 of those are in Buckinghamshire, 2 in Oxfordshire and 1 in Berkshire. The potential of Crowthorne Fire Station (FS) for drop in use by the LPA is under review after a pilot use period by the local Neighbourhood Police team; the new FS opened in May 2020, and the Police Station was sold in 2018, and on operational grounds no formal replacement was considered necessary at that time.

The most significant current project nearing completion is the new Tri-Service Blue Light hub (BLH) at West Ashlands Milton Keynes. This impressive new building is now in operational use, although the small TVP Neighbourhood Base is not yet in use, but is expected to be by Christmas. This enables the sale of the large Bletchley PS. A smaller scale new Tri-Service hub is physically underway at Theale, Berkshire where again a TVP Neighbourhood Base will be established,

enabling the sale of Pangbourne PS. Carterton in Oxfordshire is expected to be another smaller Tri-Service Hub within 3-4 years.

Linked to planned housing and population growth, TVP monitor housing plans by Local Authority area, and engage with the planning system where necessary. While developer contribution commitments in excess of £3.2m have been legally secured since 2010 (with £1.2m paid to TVP already), there are a number of new Neighbourhood Police office requirements identified in large strategic growth areas. These are typically small offices with 2 to 6 desks and usually located within new Community Centres and hubs.

The majority of these new offices have been recognised in policy and/or legal agreements, with 1 completed (Broughton FS), and 3 underway but not yet occupied (Milton Keynes Western Expansion Area, Didcot Great Western Park, and Arborfield). 22 potential offices are identified so far, but the number is under regular review, and a few may not either be required or be deliverable. Of the 22, 6 are in Buckinghamshire, 8 in Berkshire and 8 in Oxfordshire. Most of these will involve provision within Council or community association controlled premises provided by developers.

The planned TVP review of Neighbourhood Policing might have an impact on future requirements, as well as the current Neighbourhood Police office portfolio, which has reduced significantly since 2010.

c. Projects Not Progressed

Not all collaborative projects that have been considered are able to progress. Below are some examples of projects that were aborted for various reasons:

- Reading Whitley Wood BLH (including the Reading PS replacement) – cost
- Windsor York House PS replacement – planning
- Wantage FS – insufficient space for co-location
- Thame FS – timing & funding
- RBF&RS Facilities support from TVP – work done in-house by F&RS
- High Wycombe BLH – viability, deliverability & timing
- Witney BLH – viability and deliverability
- Depots/workshops consolidation – geography & timing

The most significant of these was the Reading Whitley Wood Fire/Police hub, utilising adjacent site ownerships to provide enhanced new facilities for the F&RS and a Reading PS replacement for TVP. This project was discussed for around 2 years and has an indicative total cost value of approximately £25m.

d. One Public Estate (OPE)

Berkshire and Oxfordshire have had the strongest/most relevant engagement with OPE, with a number of projects proposed, assessed and some progressed. There has been limited relevance for Blue Light in the Buckinghamshire OPE programme so far. The majority of Blue Light OPE projects to date were, or would have been considered, BAU, but with OPE providing some feasibility funding to enable an earlier or faster consideration of them. Place Reviews have not been well developed across any OPE area as yet, although Bracknell Forest Council developed a good localised example of one.

4. **Benefits** (primarily from a TVP perspective)

There have been 8 completed projects (6 Council, 2 F&RS) that have given rise to direct financial benefits for TVP, directly linked to downsizing the local estate footprint. From a financial perspective (net of replacement costs) and in summary:

a. **Achieved to date**

Capital Receipts:	£5.1m
Revenue Savings:	£257,000 pa

b. **Planned**

Capital Receipts:	£6.4m
Revenue Savings:	£259,000 pa

While TVP has achieved receipts and savings, host partners receive an income and in some cases enhancements to existing buildings. There is kudos deriving from facilitating a co-location of other public services, particularly where facilities can be “badged” as Blue Light tri-service, or accommodating multi-agency hubs.

Some co-locations give rise to direct service improvement benefits (e.g. collaborative teams such as MASH, Child Sexual Exploitation, Emergency Duties Team, Custody, Problem Solving) and indirect benefits of closer contact and relationship building with other services – such as at retained Fire Stations.

Our communities also benefit by retaining a visible TVP footprint in various locations, providing operational resilience and public re-assurance, whereas some Forces have chosen to remove them. This benefit is particularly the case at our Sector Police Station level, typically in market towns. The public presumably see public sector bodies sharing estate as the right thing to do, where this is practical to achieve.

A number of co-locations have taken place that have incurred a “new” cost to TVP over the years – such as some MASH’s hosted by Councils (offset to some degree by TVP charging an agreed uniform rate to Councils it hosts), and the Victims Hub. Some co-locations remain on a nil cost/charge basis, both within TVP buildings and where TVP is within partner buildings. CCTV hubs are reflected in a wider partnership arrangement.

One benefit that is particularly noticeable is the constructive and strong personal relationships between estates teams around Blue Light. OPE has fostered much better/more productive relationships with Council estates leads.

5. **Future Projects**

COVID and the implications on future ways of working for all public sector estates, will represent an opportunity for further collaborative discussions. It is currently unclear whether this will generate specific collaborative estate projects that are worthwhile and viable, however the discussion can be broad to cover estate related procurement, training etc. A joint approach to some procurement is already a feature of Blue Light collaboration.

Pre-COVID, there was a range of potential projects and feasibility assessments underway, or being considered. Below are some examples which are or maybe picked up as necessary going forward.

Buckinghamshire - Waddesdon FS, Amersham civic area (possible OPE), Buckingham

Berkshire - Bracknell (possible OPE or BAU), Reading town centre facility, Newbury

Oxfordshire - Oxford co-location opportunities, Bicester Civic Area, Didcot Place Review (all of these possibly OPE), Carterton FS/Blue Light Hub, Oxfordshire CCTV hub.

There are other possible themes for discussion, or re-visiting periodically if circumstances change, such as AMP alignment, depots/workshops, estates services functions, training, housing growth.

Ongoing OPE programmes and future government funding/bidding rounds are likely to generate further collaborative opportunities over time. The OPE boards are keen to keep Blue Light services engaged.

6. **Threats & Opportunities**

Some issues and risks/threats that can impact on the extent of and outcomes from collaboration would include:

National funding climate [austerity] – a focus on people/jobs over estate drives estate rationalisation, and conversely, making better use of retained estates across the public sector to enable that

Business continuity [resilience] – where estate sharing enables a local operational footprint to be maintained and service delivery supported

Housing/population growth – often generates a collaborative discussion around a collective public sector requirement, and solution to major growth pressures

Organisational reviews & changes – can alter the ongoing requirement and rationale for retention, or disposal, in specific cases. The nature of some reviews can rightly justify a pause in estate plans, but this needs to be balanced against resultant frustration

Sustainability – an increasing agenda priority which might involve sharing best practice, procurement and other opportunities to enhance our collective sustainability performance.

Enabling ICT – increasingly important to help enable further challenging estate rationalisation and maintain service delivery. A greater ability for ICT to make it easier

to utilise respective estate portfolios on a shared occupancy basis, would possibly encourage more estate sharing at a local level.

Future role of OPE – while the relevance of OPE to TVP, and Blue Light generally, has waned, TVP Property Services continue to engage and monitor opportunities for collaboration. In Berkshire there is a shift now towards a much more strategic and wide-ranging pan-Berkshire approach, replacing what has felt like a tactical level series of localised estate projects. There may be a review across Berkshire of Council HQ facilities and what opportunities may arise post-COVID.

7. Summary & Next Steps

There are certainly positive messages from the work undertaken and in hand currently, as outlined above. It is however recognised that we could all collectively do more. Post-COVID opportunities should be explored, and ideas shared. Relationships can be built upon with a move away from residual “arm’s length” approaches still prevalent in some councils.

Approaches to collaborative estate projects should be standardised where practical – something that has been progressed with Blue Light. Appropriate prioritisation of projects needs monitoring, as what can be important for TVP is sometimes of low priority for a partner, and vice versa.

With so much change underway and likely, it becomes increasingly important to scan what is happening nationally on estates issues, through national bodies such as the National Police Estates Group, National Fire Estates Group and ACES. OPE can be a channel to develop and share more localised best practice, tapping into national and regional best practice examples.

Finally, the estate always needs to support service delivery, so as operational collaboration initiatives are developed, early engagement with the estates leads is important to ensure a co-ordinated approach to delivering the best estate outcome when required. For example, that worked well with the rollout of MASH offices.