

Background Information

Emergency Services Collaboration in Thames Valley

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 provides a mandate for Blue Light services to achieve closer working, collaboration and integration where appropriate in the interests of greater transparency, efficiency gains and provide improved value to the community.

The **Thames Valley Collaboration Steering Group** produced an Emergency Services Collaboration in the Thames Valley document and the following excerpts were taken from the document.

The Steering Group provides the political and non-executive leadership of the Ambulance, Fire and Rescue and Police services across the Thames Valley. The blue light services of the Thames Valley have a proud tradition of collaboration and the Steering Group is committed to supporting and driving collaborative initiatives across the emergency services.

From the day-to-day interaction of front-line staff at emergency incidents, to the sharing of premises and procurement opportunities, regular work in partnership takes place for the good of Thames Valley communities.

In 2017, the Policing and Crime Act placed a statutory duty on fire and rescue authorities, police forces, and ambulance trusts to:

- Keep collaboration opportunities under review;
- Notify other emergency services of proposed collaborations that could be in the interests of their mutual efficiency or effectiveness; and
- Give effect to a proposed collaboration, where the proposed parties agree that it would be in the interests of their efficiency or effectiveness and that it does not have an adverse effect on public safety.

Why should Collaboration take place?

All of the emergency services in the Thames Valley collaborate with other services on their borders and there are many examples nationally of what has been achieved by collaboration.

Under the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the Police and Crime Commissioner was given an enabling power to undertake the preparation of a business case to consider the benefits of changes in the governance arrangements of the services involved.

Section 2(1) of the Policing and Crime Act imposes on each of the three emergency services, a new duty to keep collaboration opportunities under review where it would be in the interests of efficiency or effectiveness of at least two of the services, for those services to give effect to such collaboration.

Section 2(2) requires that where an emergency service identifies an opportunity to collaborate, it has a duty to notify the other relevant emergency services of the proposed collaboration.

Section 2(3) then imposes a duty to consider whether the proposed collaboration would be in the interests of the efficiency or effectiveness of the proposed parties.

Where two or more of the emergency services consider it would be in the interests of their efficiency or effectiveness to collaborate, section 2(5) gives rise to a duty to enter into a collaboration agreement.

Estates collaboration

There is an established process between the fire and rescue services and TVP and forms a sub-group of the Interoperability Group. Through regular meetings, those responsible for management of the estate consider the entire portfolio and seek opportunities for improvements by working together. Oxfordshire County Council FRS (OFRS), Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes FRS (B&MK FRS) and Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) provide Dynamic Activation Points for ambulance crews; these include welfare facilities and electrical charging points for SCAS at many of their stations.

Work is also underway to develop shared facilities at Newport Pagnell and Princes Risborough Fire stations, and the whole area of joint development of the estate is kept under constant review by the services.

In Royal Berkshire, a number of collaborative estates projects are ongoing. Royal Berkshire's first tri-service station was opened in Hungerford in June 2017, with another tri-service station opened at Crowthorne in the summer of 2020.

At Theale, it is proposed to build a new fire station with facilities provided for both SCAS and TVP on the premises. And similarly the three services are investigating the feasibility of integrated facilities in the area of Whitley Wood/Three Mile Cross near Reading.

In April 2018, Thames Valley Police teams integrated with fire service support teams at the Fire Service Headquarters in Calcot, Reading.

The Milton Keynes Emergency Services Hub was developed by Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority, working with South Central Ambulance Trust and Thames Valley Police. It is a new purpose built 'Hub' that will see all three services operate from one site, based at West Ashland in Milton Keynes.

The state-of-the-art building will allow the three services to exit five existing sites in the Milton Keynes area, which will free-up those sites for alternative use and provide substantial savings to taxpayers from reduced running costs.

In Oxfordshire, a number of fire stations are under consideration for redevelopment, with a view to increasing collaborative working as a result.