

STRATEGIC ASSET INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK

2019 – 2034







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FOREWORD

Councillor Angus Ross, Lead Member for Strategic Assets



It is my pleasure to introduce this 15-year Strategic Asset Investment Framework document. Producing this document has been a necessary and vital move by Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Authority. The Authority has recognised that in this period of uncertainty and volatility of funding, we must provide leadership and strategic vision for the Service and our partners.

Through our Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) processes, we continue to develop and refine the prevention, protection and response service we deliver to the people we serve. This document sets out how we will maintain and renew the vital capital assets, necessary to support these services. Our capital assets include our fire stations and HQ, fleet and equipment and our ICT systems. All together, they represent a major capital investment. The efficiency of these assets can also have a significant impact on our revenue budget, as older stations, fire appliances and ICT require additional maintenance and are often more expensive to run. This programme, therefore, offers many opportunities for 'invest to save' projects.

We have entered an exciting period where we are now realising the benefits of earlier collaboration projects. Now encouraged by Central Government, our collaborative projects with partner blue light services and other public organisations are becoming ever-more effective. This is evident in the sharing of the facilities in our new stations with Thames Valley Police and South Central Ambulance Service, joint procurement arrangements and our joint Thames Valley Fire Control Service, all leading to greater efficiency, effectiveness and resilience.

So, Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, the body composed of elected councillors from across the County, has adopted this Framework. Within the Framework, we set out our aspirations to invest in community assets and support the vital public services provided by RBFRS. We have already started to realise our vision of Fire Stations at the Heart of Communities, with our Hungerford project and others, which are now well advanced. Our new fire appliances, incorporating the latest technology, jointly designed and procured with our Thames Valley colleagues are already serving our communities. Our ICT systems are rapidly reaching out to every element of the Service and greatly benefitting how we operate.

We aspire to being one of the leading fire services in the Country, whilst maintaining our Council Tax levels in the lower half of such authorities. This programme will underpin our service to the residents and businesses of Berkshire for the next 15 years. I know this is best for the people of Berkshire, but also for our committed, highly trained and professional staff who keep us safe.



INTRODUCTION

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority is a Combined Fire Authority, which means it is made up of 20 elected councillors from the six unitary authorities in Berkshire. The Chairman is Councillor Colin Dudley, of Bracknell Forest Council and the Lead Member with responsibility for strategic assets is Councillor Angus Ross, of Wokingham Borough Council. You can find out more about the Fire Authority via the link: www.rbfrs.co.uk/fireauthority.

The Fire Authority's key responsibility is to make sure it provides an effective fire and rescue service for the communities across Berkshire. The Authority has made six commitments to the people of Berkshire:

1. We will provide education and advice on how to prevent fires and other emergencies.
2. We will ensure a swift and appropriate response when called to emergencies.
3. We will provide advice, consultation and enforcement in relation to fire safety standards in buildings.
4. We will seek opportunities to contribute to a broader safety, health and wellbeing agenda, whilst delivering our core functions.
5. We will ensure that RBFRS provides good value for money.
6. We will work with Central Government and key stakeholders in the interests of the people of Royal Berkshire.

To deliver on these Strategic Commitments, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) provides prevention, protection and response services across the County of Berkshire, serving a diverse population, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Our Vision focuses on three key themes:

Service Delivery – Fire Stations at the Heart of Communities;

Service Support – Capacity, Capability and Resilience and

Culture – One Team working collaboratively for the people we serve.

To ensure that we have the right resources, in the right place, at the right time to deliver on these key themes, we need to maintain a significant asset base. This document sets out the Authority's 15-year strategy for the replacement and refurbishment of these assets.

In simple terms, the strategic assets of RBFRS can be broken down into three broad categories:



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- Our buildings, which includes 18 fire stations.
 - Our fire appliances, equipment and support fleet.
 - Our ICT infrastructure and systems.

By working in collaboration with relevant partners – particularly those from the blue light services – RBFRS can deliver greater monetary and non-monetary benefits for the communities we serve. Therefore, at the core of this framework is the concept of collaboration.

RBFRS is rightly proud of the success to date in this area. This programme provides more opportunities to collaborate further and deliver greater efficiency and effectiveness for the future of the Service.



OUR BUILDINGS

In 2017, we initiated a detailed analysis of our existing building stock. This “fit-for-purpose” analysis confirmed that almost all of our existing buildings would need major refurbishment or replacement over the next 15 years. The existing stations, mostly built between the 1950s and 1970s are not only expensive to maintain and operate, but they are no longer suitable for a modern community-based fire and rescue service. They lack:

- Appropriate storage and servicing space for modern fire appliances and equipment.
- Appropriate community facilities to support our prevention and education programmes.
- Appropriate facilities for a more diverse workforce.
- Appropriate facilities to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act regulations.

Hungerford Case Study

Hungerford Community Fire Station officially opened following a major refurbishment in July 2017.

The refurbishment delivered a modern, fit-for-purpose fire station, which also provided Royal Berkshire with the first community tri-service station, with shared facilities for Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Thames Valley Police and South Central Ambulance Service.

The collaborative approach extends beyond Hungerford, and RBFRS will continue to develop and explore other opportunities for co-location of blue light services across the rest of Royal Berkshire. Hungerford serves as a beacon to demonstrate what the emergency services can achieve when they work together.







Phasing of the Work

Planning and feasibility work is at an advanced stage for projects set out in phase 1 of the table on page 9. Provision for the costs of phase 1 have been built into the Fire Authority's Medium Term Financial Plan. The projects listed in subsequent phases have been grouped based on the capacity to undertake the necessary work and the service delivery needs of the organisation. It should be noted however, that through the Thames Valley Collaboration Programme, the Berkshire One Public Estate Programme and the future IRMP processes, this ordering is likely to change. The programme has the flexibility to progress between phases when collaboration opportunities or emerging business needs dictate as necessary.

The actual cost of delivering each of these projects will only be known once a detailed design specification has been undertaken and a tender process complete. Indicative costs are shown for all of the necessary works.

The Fire Authority has also built in the necessary due diligence processes to scrutinise and approve each project on its individual merits. The move from making provision to authorising spend can only be agreed by the Fire Authority once funding is in place and the appropriate feasibility studies and tendering exercises have been completed.



	Phase 1 2019/20 – 2023/24	Phase 2 2023/24 – 2027/28	Phase 3 2027/28 – 2029/30	Phase 4 2029/30 – 2033/34
New Fire Stations	Theale £6.2m			
Major Redevelopment	Crowthorne £1.7m	Langley £4.5m	Newbury £2m	Bracknell £2m
	Whitley Wood £2m	Slough £4.5m	Lambourn £1.5m	Maidenhead £1m
	Caversham Road £4.5m	Wokingham Road £2m		Mortimer £1.5m
		Ascot £2m		Wargrave £1.5m
Minor Works	£0.65m	£0.52m	£0.26m	£0.52m
Total	£15.05m	£13.52m	£3.76m	£6.52m



OUR FLEET

In 2015, a review of the RBFRS fleet was completed. The review identified that RBFRS had the second oldest pumping appliance fleet amongst English fire and rescue services. It also initiated the development of the RBFRS Fleet Strategy, which sets out the medium to long-term replacement profile for all vehicles within RBFRS. This strategy aims to ensure the whole fleet is effective and flexible to meet the Prevention, Protection and Response aspirations of RBFRS.

Thames Valley Fire Appliances Case Study

Following an extensive collaborative design and procurement exercise, a contract was signed in 2016 for the delivery of 37 new Volvo fire engines in partnership with Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service. The first seven RBFRS appliances have been delivered to stations with a further eight to be delivered by spring 2020.

The fire engines will enable better partnership working among the control staff and the front-line firefighters – increasing the benefit of having them at stations that regularly attend incidents in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

A collaborative procurement with Oxfordshire and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Services to purchase aerial appliances has been concluded and the order for the RBFRS appliance has now been placed with a seven per cent saving on the total cost.





Phasing of the Work

The phasing of works is purely indicative and based on ongoing maintenance and operational requirements, as well as opportunities to work with partners; any of which may alter the phasing of works.

	Phase 1 2019/20 – 2023/24	Phase 2 2023/24 – 2027/28	Phase 3 2027/28 – 2029/30	Phase 4 2029/30 – 2033/34
Fleet	Fire Appliances £4.25m	Fire Appliances £2.25m	Fire Appliances £1.15m	Fire Appliances £2.6m
	Special Appliances £1.55m	Special Appliances £0	Special Appliances £0.19m	Special Appliances £0
	Aerial Ladder Platform £0.75m	Aerial Ladder Platform £0	Aerial Ladder Platform £0	Aerial Ladder Platform £0
	Other Ancillary Vehicles £0.46m	Other Ancillary Vehicles £0.32m	Other Ancillary Vehicles £0.2m	Other Ancillary Vehicles £0.4m
Equipment	Other Equipment £1.09m	Other Equipment £0	Other Equipment £0	Other Equipment £0
Total	£8.1m	£2.57m	£1.54m	£3m



OUR ICT

ICT is a key enabler and data is a core business asset. Both need to be effectively managed, keeping in-step with appropriate technological changes, national initiatives and security standards in order to support and improve the Service that we provide to the people of Berkshire.

The ICT Strategy focuses on four key areas:

- Simplification of the ICT landscape;
- Enhanced internal and external collaboration capabilities;
- Support for flexible deployment of ICT capabilities; and
- Virtualisation (cloud-based ICT resources and services).

The four pillars of the Strategy will help ensure that RBFRS will benefit from the lowest cost and greatest agility in responding to an ever-more rapidly evolving technology landscape, therefore, providing more opportunities for RBFRS to provide a faster, higher quality and better value service to our communities.

To support the Strategy, our 15-year ICT investment can be grouped under five key categories:

1. Hardware;
2. Software;
3. Services;
4. Network infrastructure; and
5. Security and resilience.

In the next 15 years, the shift from on-premise, to cloud-based solutions will ensure that the key ICT solutions are examined and refreshed. These major refresh projects are additional opportunities to drive simplification, enhanced collaboration, flexibility and virtualisation in our ICT services.

Virtualisation Case Study

The previous ICT Strategy identified that the ICT infrastructure was outdated and no longer fit-for-purpose. The physical data centre had limited scope for improvement, was slow at processing data, gave limited options for resilience and offered limited system recovery. We identified that we would need to make provision within the Framework for a replacement solution.



We identified that we could improve the overall infrastructure, data storage, back-up and disaster recovery requirements through the provision of a new virtualised environment. This is where multiple physical machines are replaced by a virtual network of servers, which:

1. Significantly increase capacity;
2. Offer faster processing; and
3. Increase resilience through back-up and disaster recovery solutions.

The solution was implemented in early 2017, but was put to the test on a Friday in June 2017, when we were subject to a ransomware attack. This was not a targeted attack, but opening one email encrypted over 100,000 files. We received a bitcoin ransom request of 2,000 bitcoins, which is equivalent to approximately £10 million.

Within an hour, the ICT team had disabled server links and started to shut down shared drives to limit the impact. The network was rebuilt and restored in 20 minutes because of the new virtualisation system and we were back to business as usual within 48 hours.

RBFRS' strategic move to a virtualisation system requires a phased shift from hardware and software spending to networks, resilience, security and 'Software as a Service' and 'Platform as a Service' spending.



Phasing of the Work

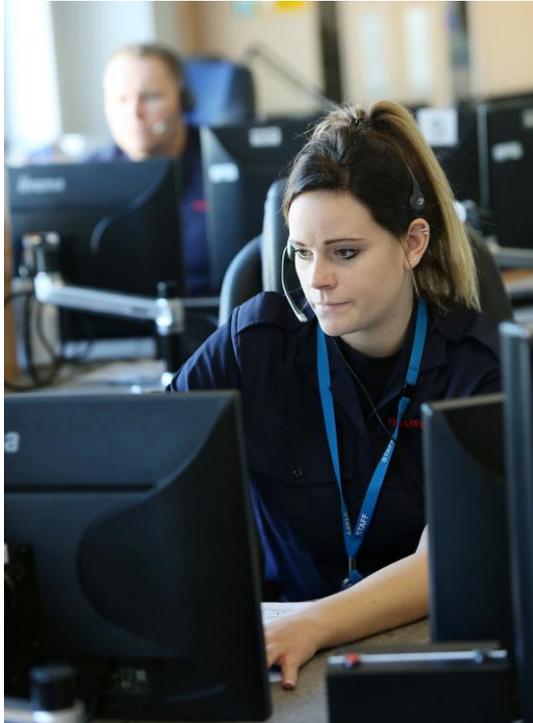
The phasing of works is purely indicative and based on business needs, keeping in step with appropriate technological advances, national initiatives and security standards; any of which may alter the phasing of works.

	Phase 1 2019/20 – 2023/24	Phase 2 2023/24 – 2027/28	Phase 3 2027/28 – 2029/30	Phase 4 2029/30 – 2033/34
ICT	Hardware	Hardware	Hardware	Hardware
	£1.07m	£ 0.72m	£0.36m	£0.72m
	Software	Software	Software	Software
	£0.6m	£0.235m	£0.08m	£0.16m
	Services	Services	Services	Services
	£0.81m	£1.304m	£0.584m	£1.52m
	Networks	Networks	Networks	Networks
	£0.785m	£0.32m	£0.16m	£0.32m
	Security Resilience	Security Resilience	Security Resilience	Security Resilience
	£0.67m	£0.28m	£0.14m	£0.28m
	ESMCP	ESMCP	ESMCP	ESMCP
	£0.132m	£0m	£0	£0
Total	£4.067m	£2.859m	£1.324m	£3m



GENERATING CONTRIBUTIONS TO RUNNING COSTS FROM ASSETS

Thames Valley Fire Control Service Case Study



The Thames Valley Fire Control Service, which is based at RBFRS' Headquarters, answers 999 calls and mobilises fire engines to incidents across the Thames Valley, on behalf of the three fire and rescue services, serving a combined population of over two-million people.

The cost of the control centre was funded by grants from Central Government.

This collaboration delivers a single joint emergency call handling, mobilising and resource management function, which has delivered significant cost efficiencies to all three fire authorities. Increased resilience, efficiency and improved performance is resulting in collective savings of over £1 million a year.



FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service is currently implementing the Home Office Reform Programme to deliver a more effective and efficient core service that meets the needs and expectations of residents and taxpayers within the County.

When considering the renewal or enhancement of our capital assets, we consider the extent to which capital expenditure increases the effectiveness and efficiency of the organisation, thus, balancing the needs of the users of our services against the needs of those who are required to fund those services.

The Fire Authority's strategy has always been to offset cuts in Government funding, with efficiency savings and income generation over the medium-term rather than rely on reserves to fund revenue expenditure. With this in mind, the Fire Authority chose to use the previous flexibility granted by the Government for the financial year 2013/14 to increase the precept by £5 to not only balance its budget over the medium-term, but also to build up reserves to support an invest-to-save strategy to replace expensive and ageing assets.

Rather than just enhance or replace existing fire stations, opportunities are always sought to relocate fire stations where there is clear evidence that operational effectiveness and efficiency will increase. As an example, the new Theale Fire Station will provide better response times to high risk areas than current arrangements. In addition, the running costs of a newly built fire station with the same footprint are 40% lower than current running costs.

The Authority's Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) takes into account the financial consequences of the capital programme up until 2022/23. Over the next four years, a relocated wholetime station will be built, another wholetime station is planned to be rebuilt on its existing site, a refurbishment of the training centre is planned and an on-call (retained) fire station will be significantly enhanced. Based on the costs set out in this document and the assumptions set out in the MTFP, these projects together with continuing investment in fleet and ICT can be delivered through the use of earmarked reserves, capital receipts and additional borrowing. The revenue costs of financing this additional borrowing have been factored into the MTFP and with the judicious use of reserves and capital receipts the additional costs of borrowing will not hit the revenue account until 2021/22.

However, without additional funding streams, the ability of the Fire Authority to continue to invest beyond 2023/24 in its fire stations will be severely restricted, as earmarked reserves and capital receipts will have been expended.

Given this shortfall in funding – and the fact that this Fire Authority is one of the lowest precepting fire authorities in the Country – the Fire Authority gave the Chairman and the Chief Fire Officer a mandate to speak to Berkshire MPs to make



them aware of these issues and ask for greater flexibility to increase Council Tax when setting the budget.

On this basis, MPs have been lobbying Government on our behalf to give the Fire Authority the flexibility to increase council tax by up to £5 per annum, without holding a referendum. An increase of £5 in the precept would generate an additional £1.7m in annual income. Our MPs believe that as the Fire Authority has demonstrated prudence in the past, it should be trusted with flexibility in relation to precept increases to ensure that communities benefit from technological advances in IT, fleet and equipment and that fire stations are open to communities and focal points for blue light services.

In addition, given that capital-intensive nature of fire and rescue services, we would be keen to see the establishment of a national Transformation Fund against which fire authorities could bid to secure funding for capital projects that deliver revenue savings and more effective services for residents.

Summary of Capital Investment Requirements

	Phase 1 2019/20 – 2023/24	Phase 2 2023/24 – 2027/28	Phase 3 2027/28 – 2029/30	Phase 4 2029/30 – 2033/34
Buildings	£15.05m	£13.52m	£3.76m	£6.52m
Fleet & Equipment	£8.1m	£2.57m	£1.54m	£3m
ICT	£4.067m	£2.859m	£1.324m	£3m
Total	£27.217m	£18.949m	£6.624m	£12.52m

The total provision over the 15 years of the Strategic Asset Investment Framework is £65.31m.

GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

