Strategic Asset Investment Framework

10 Year Strategy

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Foreword

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I am delighted to introduce the latest update of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Asset Investment Framework (SAIF). In light of the broader economic landscape and the evolving requirements of both communities and staff, it is important that we maintain a focus on maximising value of public funds. We have successfully refurbished or rebuilt half of our entire estate over the past few years, whilst also uplifting our broader assets in the priority areas of sustainability, dignified workspaces and contaminants management.

I am proud to have seen so much progress in the past year with much achieved across an ambitious programme.

The new Learning and Development Centre at Whitley Wood, has been completed on time and budget, delivering first class facilities for our staff, enabling effective critical training for years to come, whilst lowering our environmental impact. The bold approach to use modern modular methods of construction has worked and I expect to see this as a feature of some of the Fire Authority's future investments.

We have delivered numerous sustainability improvements across the estate, helping to meet the Fire Authority's strengthened commitment to help tackle the climate emergency, whilst benefitting from additional central Government grant funding. This has included replacing outdated fossil fuel boilers with heat pumps, upgrading thermal insulation and, where feasible, installing roof-mounted solar panels. Further efforts to improve dignified workplace standards and workforce safety, along with contaminants management improvements, have been made and will remain ongoing.

Moving forward, we intend to complete the remaining aspects of our estate refurbishment programme at pace, whilst recognising the changing landscape of community risk, capital funding limitations and the opportunities for greater collaboration with partners. A new feature of this revised SAIF is the early financial allocations to remaining sites to enhance planning and design as a programme of collective projects. We expect this to realise efficiencies, ensure an improved distribution of available capital funding in the medium term and help us more meaningfully engage with potential partners.

Investment in our frontline fleet has seen the delivery of three new state of the art fire appliances serving the people of Berkshire even better than before. Other assets,

including off-road vehicles, have been added to transform capability and address growing climate change needs, such as responding to wildfires and flooding.

I am pleased to see continued investment in staff wellbeing and safety, such as the introduction of cutting-edge particulate blocking fire hoods, reconfiguring fire engine stowage to create a ‘clean cab’ free from contaminants and providing new personal flotation devices to enhance water rescue safety.

Information and Communication Technology is fundamental to operational and statutory functions. The organisation continues to evolve its systems to leverage ICT advances and utilise collected data, in alignment with the current ICT strategy.

I offer enormous praise to staff and their efforts in delivering these impressive initiatives, with high expectations for the coming years.

Introduction

The Fire Authority's key responsibility is to make sure it provides an effective fire and rescue service for communities across Berkshire. The Authority's purpose is to create safer and more resilient communities by preventing incidents, protecting homes and businesses, and responding to emergencies.

The Authority has a set of commitments that are regularly reviewed which explain how we intend to achieve our purpose:

1. **Prevention** - We will reduce the risk to our communities through our partnership duties and prevention activities, ensuring that our services are accessible to all.
2. **Protection** - We will support those with responsibility for premises to understand their duties in ensuring the safety of all people using buildings covered by the Building Safety Act 2022 and Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, whilst ensuring that our services are accessible to all.
3. **Response** - We will ensure that our people are trained, and resources are located to provide the most effective response and to have a positive impact on incidents in our communities.
4. **Resilience** - We will ensure our own resilience and work with partners to promote and build resilience in the communities we serve.
5. **Sustainability** - We are committed to ensuring that we provide a financially sustainable Service and take meaningful action to help address the climate emergency.
6. **People** - We will support our staff by providing a safe and inclusive environment for them to thrive in, building a diverse organisation that is engaged with, and accessible to, our communities.

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 10-year rolling strategy for the replacement, improvement or sustainment of these assets.

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

- **Our buildings**, which includes sixteen fire stations and our headquarters site which includes Thames Valley Fire Control Service;
- **Our Fleet and Equipment** including fire appliances, support fleet, operational tools and Personal protective requirements;
- **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, coupled with efficiency and financial prudence.

Our Buildings

The RBFRS estate is the foundation of our ability to protect life, property, and the environment. The annual refresh and development of the Strategic Asset Investment Framework (SAIF) provides the Authority with a clear view of the long-term financial pressures associated with meeting planned property improvements and refurbishment programmes. Over the next decade, we will invest sensibly in our buildings and facilities to ensure they remain fit for purpose, resilient to future challenges, and aligned with our ambition to deliver world-class emergency services for our communities.

Our goal is to create a modern, sustainable, and adaptable estate that supports operational excellence, enhances firefighter wellbeing, strengthens community engagement, and contributes to the UK's net zero and resilience goals.

Our estate faces increasing pressure to varying degrees from:

- Ageing infrastructure with rising maintenance costs and poor energy performance.
- Changing risk profiles, including climate-related incidents, complex rescue scenarios, and major infrastructure developments.
- Evolving workforce needs, such as inclusive, dignified workplaces, modern training environments, and digital connectivity.
- National and local policy drivers, including HMICFRS findings and government commitments to sustainability and public sector efficiency.

Against this backdrop, a coherent 10-year estates investment framework is essential to guide strategic decisions, optimise resources, and deliver tangible community benefit.

Since 2017, the Authority has seen transformation in over half of the entire estate. This ranges from new developments such as Theale and Crowthorne Fire Stations and our new Training Centre to major refurbishments at numerous sites including Bracknell, Slough and Maidenhead.

Additionally, significant progress has been made across the entire estate on our four priority investment areas:

- **Improving equality, diversity and inclusion** – creating safe, dignified facilities that support, encourage and promote a more diverse workforce now and into the future;
- **Improving contamination control** – addressing the risk of contaminants by providing better facilities for decontamination and contamination control;
- **Sustainability** – making the estate more environmentally friendly by carrying out upgrades and initiatives to reduce our carbon output and realise potential revenue savings by doing so; and
- **Improving building fabric** – investing in the fabric of the buildings to ensure longevity of our current estate and to provide fit-for-purpose workplaces for our staff.

We are raising dignified workplace standards and staff safety, with all sites enabled or managed to the minimum standard and two-thirds of those judged to be at the optimum standard. The Service has produced an unambiguous standard that can be realistically applied to all operational sites. Notably, the complexities of modernising challenging sites such as Windsor Fire Station are being addressed by adopting innovative modular solutions, tested successfully as a concept in our new training facility.

Contamination risk has been reduced to an acceptable level at all sites by the introduction of external washdown facilities and zoning areas to promote better flow of staff and equipment after an incident. These are both complex and dynamic aspects of estate development requiring a measured response to evolving standards and legislation.

Heat decarbonisation of five of our worst performing sites was completed in 2025 along with a wider programme of LED lighting upgrades across the entire estate.

Coupled with the refresh of our Property Asset Management Strategy in 2026, these achievements provide a strong foundation for the next phase of our estates transformation and exemplify the standards we aim to embed across the portfolio.

Major refurbishments of five wholetime stations and one on-call station are planned over the next five years, with detailed design work and tendering already well underway for Langley Fire Station. Detailed requirements development, design and planning work will commence in 2026 for our next major project at Newbury Fire

Station, which will include a strategic basing assessment. To support planning, feasibility studies will be carried out on our sites in Caversham Road (Reading), Wokingham Road (Reading), Wokingham and Mortimer. Following on from the work at Windsor Fire Station, a project will be undertaken to uplift dignified workplace standards at Ascot Fire Station.

Case Study – Whitley Wood Learning and Development Centre

RBFRS delivered its first modular construction project, replacing two outdated structures with a modern, fit-for-purpose facility. This approach addressed urgent operational needs while maintaining continuity of critical training and station functions.

Key Drivers

Urgency: A burst pipe accelerated timelines, requiring a rapid yet permanent solution.

Operational Continuity: Training and station activities remained fully functional throughout the build.

Future-Proofing: Flexible design accommodates growth, policy changes, and evolving service requirements.

Why Modular?

Off-site manufacturing ran in parallel with on-site preparation, reducing programme duration.

The building was craned into position in just four days, minimising disruption and avoiding costly relocation.

Factory-controlled quality ensured consistency and reduced defects.

Sustainability & Safety Features

Targeting BREEAM ‘Very Good’ rating with air source heat pumps, EV charging, and energy-efficient systems.

Enhanced zoning for contamination control, plus specialist solutions such as ionisation tiles and BA washing/drying equipment.

Benefits Delivered

- Rapid delivery without compromising quality.
- Maintained operational capability throughout.
- Dignified spaces, flexible layouts, and improved facilities for staff.

Supports recruitment and effective training.

This project demonstrates modular construction as a strategic enabler—delivering speed, sustainability, and resilience while setting a strong precedent for future estate improvements.

Case Study – Dignified Workplace Sanitary and Rest Areas

The Dignified Workplace Standards established a baseline for the facilities required on stations to ensure dignity and privacy for all staff. Originally introduced in 2023, these standards were reviewed and approved by the Senior Leadership Team in September 2025 in response to significant legal and operational developments. The primary driver for these changes is legal compliance and the need to mitigate critical risks. The Equality Act 2010 obliges employers to make reasonable adjustments and prohibits discrimination, while the Worker Protection Act 2023 strengthens these obligations by placing a proactive duty on employers to prevent harassment. Furthermore, the Supreme Court ruling in April 2025 clarified that “sex” under the Equality Act refers to biological sex, reinforcing the requirement for single-sex facilities unless they are fully private.

Inadequate facilities create a heightened risk of sexual harassment, indirect discrimination, and operational inefficiencies, such as restrictions on standby moves. By implementing clear and consistent standards, RBFRS reduces these risks and ensures that all staff can work in a safe and respectful environment. Inclusive design, such as gender-neutral and individual occupancy spaces, plays a vital role in preventing exclusion and harassment while supporting trans and non-binary employees. Appropriate facilities also enable flexible deployment and standby arrangements without introducing discrimination risks. The standards have been tailored to station occupancy and watch strength, ensuring they are practical and proportionate across the estate.

These changes also reflect RBFRS’s strategic commitment to its people. Providing safe, inclusive, and dignified facilities is fundamental to creating an environment where staff can thrive. Implementing the standards is not only a legal necessity but also a strategic priority that safeguards dignity, safety, and inclusion for all employees. In line with best practice, all sanitary and rest areas should ideally be gender-neutral and single occupancy to minimise discrimination and harassment risks. Recognising financial constraints, the standards outline two compliance levels: acceptable and desirable. Acceptable standards require facilities for male, female, and trans staff, although space and allocation vary by the watch strength of stations.

From 2025 onwards, all new builds and remodels must meet the desirable standard to ensure compliance and reduce future retrofit costs. The standards have been designed to reflect station size and occupancy and align with workforce and operational needs, including standby and cross-station working. As workforce diversity continues to grow, these standards will require ongoing review and updates. For example, an increase in female staff may necessitate additional dormitory space at stations without individual occupancy, making a flexible approach essential.

Case Study - Sustainability

The Authority has made a strategic commitment to sustainability, and it is committed to minimising the impact of the organisation's operations on the environment and reducing its carbon footprint. It will do so in a way that supports the United Kingdom's commitment to sustainable development and reducing the effects of climate change. To help cement its commitment, the Authority released its Sustainability Strategy 2024-2029 on 08 October 2024 that sought to make an impact and deliver benefits across all business areas, subject to available resources.

In the broader sense of sustainability, the SAIF upholds the Authority's strategic commitment by promoting asset longevity through focussed refurbishments rather than demolition and new builds that release or create carbon respectively. Upgrading our current estate and infrastructure is also both more financially and environmentally sustainable than investing in new builds. Introducing sustainable technologies and delivering projects with sustainability in mind will start to significantly reduce our carbon footprint at our sites and reduce operating costs in the longer term.

Estate activities typically generate about two-thirds of business carbon emissions, with buildings responsible for 65% of this (1,524 tCO2 annually for RBFRS). To help mitigate our impact, consultant-led heat decarbonisation plans (HDP), funded by the Low Carbon Skills Fund, were developed in 2023, followed by practical steps to make a difference as laid out below, part funded by the Salix-administered Government Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS). The SAIF outlines programmes that seek improve environmental performance across the estate and save around £140,000 in the short-to-medium term.

To meet emission reduction targets sustainability is now embedded into all major estate projects, led by a dedicated Sustainability Officer who can focus on planning and delivery. Initiatives include:

- Heat decarbonisation has been completed at five priority sites to improve the thermal performance of building fabric and replace outdated and inefficient heating plant with air source heat pumps, coupled with new building management control systems. Using the HDPs, a successful bid was made to the PSDS for £928,000 to assist with these works. The Authority has contributed towards the PSDS funded work seeing a total investment of £2.254m in this important area.
- Installation of LED lighting across the estate – this was the least complex initiative and offering the quickest return on investment with the minimum resource demand. This project saw five sites completed in 2024/2025, with further sites to be planned for delivery when they are refurbished.
- Where permissible and practicable, installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems also offers a good return on investment (estimated average 7 years) and will be completed over a three-year period, starting in 2025. Resilience measures using batteries will also be considered if financially viable and practicable.
- A general provision has been made for sustainability, to provide flexibility and agility with initiatives, and to facilitate a more dynamic approach.
- Electric vehicle (EV) charging Included in the above to support a cautious approach to this technology and ensure prudent investment with the installation of charging point. Planning will start in 2026 for delivery after 2027.

Case Study – Replacement LED Lighting

Initiatives to support our sustainability goals of reducing environmental impact and carbon are constantly being assessed and RBFRS identified outdated fluorescent and halogen lighting as a major energy and maintenance burden. Gap analysis further identified five sites that were not currently being considered for LED upgrades under other projects. In response to this, the Service sought a modern LED solution that would cut emissions, enhance working conditions, and reduce costs across its operational estate.

To ensure the optimum solution was implemented with value for money in mind, the Service partnered with energy technology experts Laser via a public procurement framework. Laser's expertise and experience in the sector provided a level of assurance, encompassing end-to-end project delivery, from initial assessment and

design to installation and performance monitoring, ensuring seamless integration and measurable outcomes.

The objectives of the project were:

- Reduce energy consumption and operational costs.
- Lower carbon emissions related to our estate.
- Enhance lighting quality and reliability.
- Support RBFRS's broader environmental strategy.

The Key Actions for the project were:

- Replace 994 light fittings with LED luminaires.
- Integrate occupancy and daylight sensors for automatic control.
- Ensure compliance with BS EN 12464-1:2021 lighting standards.
- Install control systems for management and monitoring.
- Carefully phase the installation across active fire stations to limit operational disruption.

The measurable benefits were assessed as:

Metric	Result
Total carbon saving (kg/year)	32,950kg
Annual financial savings	£32,535.47
Energy reduction	62.5%
Equivalent trees saved	1,318
Payback	2.8 years

Other benefits that could be realised are:

- Better lighting quality which has enhanced visibility and colour rendering in appliance bays and offices.
- Reduction in maintenance call outs, LEDs have a lifespan of 50,000+ hours so reduce callouts by over 80%.

The sustainability impact is as follows:

- Contributed to RBFRS's Sustainability Strategy and Roadmap goals.
- Reduced hazardous waste under WEEE regulations.
- Reduced carbon emissions.
- Lower manufacturing impact as they require less energy to produce.

In conclusion, the LED lighting upgrade has delivered substantial energy savings, lower maintenance costs, and a safer, brighter working environment for RBFRS's firefighters and staff. It is considered that the project stands as a model for sustainable improvement within UK Fire and Rescue Services.

Phasing of Estates Projects

£'000	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31 to 2035/36	Total
Major Redevelopment						
Langley	650	700				1,350
Newbury	120	500	580			1,200
Caversham Rd	20	480	500			1,000
Wokingham	20	130	200			350
Mortimer	20	80				100
Ascot	170					170
Wokingham Rd	20		480			500
Whitley Wood				400		400
HQ				500		500
Sub-Total	**1,020**	**1,890**	**1,760**	**900**	**0**	**5,570**
Sustainability	**426**	**400**	**200**	**200**	**1,200**	**2,426**
Lifecycle Costs		**100**	**250**	**500**	**3,000**	**3,850**
Reactive Capital Works	**80**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**600**	**980**
Total	**1,526**	**2,490**	**2,310**	**1,700**	**4,800**	**12,826**

Estates development projects have been phased based on organisational priority and service delivery requirements, with seven fire stations now being provided for (including Langley that is in progress). Notably, Newbury has been brought forward

a year as the next lead site for detailed planning which will include a study to consider strategic options. Provision has also been made for Mortimer for general refurbishment, Ascot for dignified workplace improvements and Newsham Court (HQ RBFRS) as critical plant and equipment nears the end of its lifecycle. Where immediate improvements can be undertaken to expedite some of the core estates development objectives, opportunities will be explored in further detail and fed into the phasing where appropriate.

Importantly, the SAIF provisions are estimates as the actual cost of delivering each of the projects only becomes known once a detailed design specification has been undertaken and a tender process completed. Indicative costs are shown for all the necessary works and would be subject to the relevant approvals as set out in the final section of this document.

Plans for the first four years are shown in more detail and the impacts feed into the Authority's Medium-Term Financial Plan. Whilst we can anticipate a requirement of further investment to reduce our environmental impact and utilities cost, we are not able to specify the areas of spend at this stage. However, we do feel it appropriate to make a financial provision for future investments which could include features such as ground/air source heat pumps or grey/rainwater capture, for example. We anticipate that technological developments over the coming years will offer alternative opportunities or make existing options less cost prohibitive. We also intend to be more active in accessing grant funding during this period.

Joint Ventures

Given the age and condition of many of our properties and the dynamic nature of community risk management, the Authority is keen to explore the possibility of joint ventures as a means of sustaining existing sites or delivering new fire stations from a reduced capital outlay. It may be that as condition surveys are updated, it makes little sense in spending significant sums on some of our older buildings and the need for building a new fire station becomes more urgent. Should this be the case, the SAIF will be updated to reflect this new reality, although revisions to plans will need to be done within the envelope of affordability. Possible solutions could come from redeveloping some of our current sites or looking at some form of land swap, although the cost of demolition and development can be prohibitively expensive.

To enable a more strategic approach by the Service, a Thames Valley Estate Delivery Group has been established and is led by RBFRS. It looks at property related opportunities across all the blue light services in the region.

Disposals

Should the need arise, properties are disposed of in accordance with the Authority's 'Guiding Principles for Property Asset Release' to ensure full transparency in relation to the management of valuable assets.

Our Fleet and Equipment

Our fleet and equipment are at the heart of our operational capability — the essential tools that enable us to protect life, property, and the environment every day. The next decade will bring significant changes in technology, risk, and sustainability expectations. The SAIF sets out our long-term vision to create a modern, reliable, and sustainable operational fleet that enhances firefighter safety, supports effective emergency response, and delivers best value to the public.

Like all UK Fire and Rescue Services, we face growing operational, financial, and environmental pressures. Fleet and equipment assets must evolve to respond to:

- Ageing vehicles and assets, with rising maintenance demands and reduced reliability.
- Evolving incident profiles, including climate-related events, electric vehicle risks, and complex rescues.
- Technological innovation, creating opportunities for digital monitoring, predictive maintenance, and clean propulsion systems.
- National policy drivers, including decarbonisation commitments and greater interoperability across emergency services.

Within this context, RBFRS has already taken important steps forward. Over the past year, we have:

- Introduced three new frontline fire appliances, each equipped with modern safety systems, energy-efficient drivetrains, and enhanced crew welfare facilities, including BA out of cab and in cab ionisation filters. These vehicles represent a significant step towards fleet standardisation and environmental improvement.
- Established a strategic maintenance partnership – a Fleet Support Joint Working Agreement (JWA) – with Hampshire and Isle of wight Fire and Rescue Service, creating resilience, improving access to specialist engineering expertise, and reducing maintenance costs through shared facilities and joint procurement.

These achievements demonstrate the tangible benefits of collaboration, long-term planning, and smart investment thereby providing a strong platform on which to build our 10-year strategy.

Including the three recent acquisitions, since 2017, 22 new front line pumping appliances have been delivered into service. The Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services have worked together to design and procure a standard fire appliance that carries an aligned inventory of equipment. This is to enhance the operational response of the three services when deployed by Thames Valley Fire Control Service. Further, by aligning fleet and equipment, the Thames Valley Services have improved interoperability, increased efficiencies through aligned training, policies and procedures, as well as benefiting from more resilient maintenance and logistics opportunities.

In addition to the transformation of the front-line appliance fleet, the Service acquired a new Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) in 2021 and a new off-road capable pumping appliance in 2022. The Service has invested in off-road light vehicles that the fleet and equipment team adapted to carry wildfire optimised pumps and equipment packages to further enhance the Service's ability to respond to wildfires such as the ones experienced in 2022. Hybrid vehicles are routinely being incorporated into the fleet to start to reduce the environmental impact of our activities and six fully electric vehicles are now in the fleet enabling the impact to be reduced even further.

As reported in the SAIF 2025, the Service transitioned to using 'Interspiro' breathing apparatus as part of an operationally beneficial collaborative approach with Thames Valley fire and rescue services. The equipment has now been operational for two years and we are now out of warranty. As a Thames Valley collaborative, we will be seeking to extend the contract, as per the terms for a further two years with an option for a further two years included. This is a prudent approach for this collaboration.

Another area of focus for next year is the replacement of our small battery tools such as grinders and reciprocating saws. These small but important assets are approaching the end of their working life on the busier stations, so we will be purchasing replacements along with the tools required for the Volvo fire appliances that are being relocated to on-call stations to replace the ageing Mercedes pumping appliances.

Case Study (update) – Fire Appliance Replacement Tri-service Project

Over recent years, there has been significant work by Thames Valley fire and rescue services to align appliances, this coordinated approach towards developing a standardised appliance has improved effectiveness at cross-border incidents within the Thames Valley as well as improve efficiencies in research, procurement, and training activity.

The Programme is for the purchase of modern, efficient, and safer fire appliances to replace the legacy appliances remaining in the operational, training and reserve fleets that are reaching the end of their programmed life.

The introduction of new fire appliances in the fleet brings several significant benefits:

- Enhanced standardisation: By aligning the design standards of the fire appliances across the fleet, the new vehicles will ensure greater uniformity and consistency across the entire operational firefighting fleet. This standardisation simplifies maintenance, repair, and replacement processes, reducing downtime and associated costs. It enables identical equipment stowage across vehicles further enhancing operational flexibility in the management of reserve vehicles.
- Streamlined equipment stowage: The legacy appliance fleet, built to a different design standard, has different equipment stowage configurations. Introducing new fire appliances with consistent design standards allows for optimised equipment stowage, ensuring that tools and resources are efficiently organised and easily accessible during emergency response. This streamlining saves crucial time during critical situations and enhances operational efficiency. It reduces the training burden on staff having to know

how to operate two equipment types and simplifies the management of operational equipment across the Service.

- Simplified driver training: With the legacy fleet's different design standards, drivers require specific training to operate the older vehicles effectively. The introduction of new fire appliances built to the same design standards as the recent fleet eliminates the need for additional or specialised driver training. Firefighters can transition seamlessly between vehicles, reducing training costs and ensuring greater agility.

Case study – Particulate Blocking Fire Hoods

In 2022, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) evaluated the risk of occupational exposure of operational Firefighters to combustion related particulates. They upgraded the risk to the highest level of Carcinogenic to Humans Grade 1.

RBFRS is a leading light in reducing risk of contamination to firefighters and staff. The Fleet and Equipment team evaluated evidence showing that the jaw, forehead and scalp were second only to the groin area for the skin absorption rates of toxins. It was concluded and recommended that our firefighters be issued with the best particulate blocking fire hood available on the market, to protect the head and neck areas as much as possible.

Working with colleagues in Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service, using data from their wearer trial, to select a new fire hood, the developed criteria were:

- Protection levels – Viral 96.8%, Bacterial 97.9% and Particulates 98.1%.
- Breathability and Heat Loss (so the wearer doesn't cook inside) – 20% more efficient than the standard.

- Certification to standard – Currently only the US National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) produces a standard. Whilst not a UK standard, it is important as the US has presumptive cancer legislations.
- PFAS and PFOS free with a single layer – great protection.
- Minimal to zero shrinkage.

Working with our current PPE supplier MSA Bristol, we have issued the new BarriAire™ Gold Elite Pro Particulate Hood Comprehensive Coverage to all our firefighters, providing optimum protection.

Phasing of Fleet and Equipment Expenditure

The frontline appliances replacement programme is a steady state programme. We have aligned our front-line appliance replacement profile to a 12-year cycle as recommended by the National Fire Chiefs Council. We always seek a Thames Valley collaborative approach with appliance capability design and procurement to support interoperability.

The light fleet has an underlying replacement programme, but it is managed more dynamically as assets can be kept for longer depending on their usage, mileage and condition, thereby supporting our sustainability goals. A light fleet review will be conducted in 2026 to ensure it is optimised for operational and support requirements. It is intended to continue with the value adding and sustainable approach with light vehicles by continuing to sweat assets for longer and to always consider purchasing nearly new vehicles rather than brand new ones.

In all cases, the fleet replacement programme will be reviewed regularly as we continue to look for opportunities to build a more environmentally sustainable fleet where operationally and financially viable.

The replacement of specials is more nuanced, with many assets not requiring like-for-like replacement. A Special Vehicles Replacement and Upgrade Programme will be launched in 2026 that forms a key element of our Fleet Strategy and supports delivery of the Service's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). The programme ensures our fleet remains fit for purpose, efficient to operate, and aligned to the evolving risk profile and response requirements of our communities.

Special fleet assets that can realistically be replaced on a like-for-like lifecycle basis will have requirements checked to ensure they align with Service Delivery needs. Special assets that are linked to the evolving CRMP, will have their requirements

developed in a collegiate way to ensure all stakeholders have input into the required capability.

£'000	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31 to 2035/36	Total
Appliances	0	0	1,350	1,050	6,300	8,700
Specials	500	854	575	0	0	1,929
White Fleet	302	230	178	70	950	1,730
Operational Equipment	251	1,145	199	100	1,600	3,295
Total	**1,053**	**2,229**	**2,302**	**1,220**	**8,850**	**15,654**

Our ICT

The Strategic Asset Investment Framework for ICT should be considered in close alignment to RBFRS' ICT strategy, which currently runs from 2024-2027. Strategically, the funding model for ICT is shifting away from perpetual licensing of software into subscription-based services. This impacts the SAIF going forward as RBFRS will no longer need to capitalise periodic and routine large software update purchases and expect them to last several years before renewing. Instead, flexible subscriptions to software delivery as a service will require revenue funding on an ongoing basis. With the reduction of licencing component, core capital funding requirements going forward will be largely associated with refresh and/or expansion of existing hardware, notably laptops/desktops, mobile phones, tablets, networks, and operational communications devices such as MDTs, Airwave/ESN devices, station end and fireground radios.

New or wholesale software or system replacement projects are far more difficult to forecast and will need to use the technology roadmap and service planning process to maintain a five-year scanning horizon to anticipate system requirements that will impact the SAIF. Although the majority of such projects are likely to result in subscription-based software or platform delivery, there may still be a requirement to capitalise the procurement and implementation costs of such activities for the software or system themselves, as well as for associated hardware requirements driven by the change.

Investment aligned to the ICT strategic principles will support the overall organisational goals of improving efficiency and productivity of the workforce, releasing staff capacity for its core and value-adding activities. The 'work smarter' approach will have positive downstream impacts on staff resilience, and the overall sustainability of the Service. For this to be realised, it is imperative that ongoing refresh of technical resources is maintained, so that opportunities in more advanced software and systems can be fully leveraged to the benefit of the organisation. It is recommended therefore that periodic hardware and network refresh schedules are maintained as at present in principle, as shown in the table overleaf, with an exception allowed for one year to test a robustness of equipment and an impact of extending its usable life to RBFRS to 4 years. This will liberate funding necessary for other critical projects, while limiting risk to a manageable level.

Device	Refresh Cycle
Laptops	Rolling 3 years
Desktop computers	Rolling 4 years
Tablets	Rolling 2 years
Smartphones	Rolling 2 years
MDTs	Every 5 years
Airwave / ESN Devices	Over 7 years currently*
Fireground Radios	Every 7 years
Network Devices	Every 10 years

* Once transitioned to ESN the type of device will change and may require different refresh cycle.

Various factors over the medium-term dictate that the ICT investment focus should shift towards the facilitation of the greatest possible consolidation, integration, and exploitations of systems and hardware leading to improvements in efficiency and productivity across all parts of the organisation, enabling capturing and subsequently analysing the data to improve decision making. This will be accomplished by:

- Leveraging capabilities available within ecosystems already engaged with (primarily Microsoft 365) and end user hardware available to improve business processes;
- Greater integration of supporting applications and services with core Microsoft 365 Application suites (e.g. SDS, H&S, Finance, etc.);
- Improved digital solutions for core operational activities (notably Protection, Enforcement, and Prevention, Data capture and analysis); and
- Changes in RBFRS' data architecture bringing about a facility enabling advanced data intelligence and use of AI.

- Delivery of a replacement to our current Risk Information Database system enabling automation and leading to significant efficiencies, stability and security improvements.

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.

Projects underway include a large-scale migration of core systems to the cloud, significant ICT Hardware refresh, a new Finance System, a Staff Development System, a Risk Information Database system replacement as well as preparations for deployment of PowerBi and wider data architecture adjustment across the service with associated adjustments in processes. The cloud migration will continue in phases for another year and is anticipated to be completed by 2027 in line with the ICT Strategy. The Risk Information Database system will unlock opportunities for improving the quality of risk information provided to our Staff who rely on it for safely performing their operational duties. Transition to PowerBi as RBFRS's reporting and visualising toolset, with associated architectural structures, will equip our staff with tools and skills required to access information needed for decision making without delay, thus improving our effectiveness and productivity.

Taking all of this into account, the capital requirement over the next 10 years for ICT is likely to be approximately £5.4m. To mitigate single year costs, refreshes may be brought forward/put back by one year to even out the cost profile, dependant on current equipment performance at that time.

The anticipated capital requirement for ICT is shown in the table below.

£'000	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31 to 2035/36	Total
ICT Hardware	106	43	215	267	1,314	1,945
ICT Core Infrastructure	58	0	40	15	18	131
Network solutions	0	0	0	0	611	611
Ops end user ICT hardware	0	0	0	406	0	406
ESN*	0	0	0	0	340	340
AV and tele conferencing	7	7	72	7	87	180
Software	0	0	0	0	0	0
Services/Delivery /Projects	156	499	109	109	436	1,309
Risk Information Database	270	0	0	0	0	270
Transition to Power BI	200	0	0	0	0	200
Total	**797**	**549**	**436**	**804**	**2,806**	**5,392**

***Subject to ESN go live**

Case Study: RBFRS Cloud Migration and Improved Operational Resilience

Background

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service has historically hosted its ICT systems within Service premises. This on-site model relied on periodic, large capital purchases of server hardware sized to meet anticipated demand several years ahead. Because future needs were difficult to predict accurately, the hardware procured often exceeded actual requirements, resulting in unnecessary capacity and inefficiency.

To maintain business continuity, RBFRS also operated a secondary recovery site to mitigate the risk of primary server room failure. This created additional infrastructure and maintenance demands. The on-premises approach required substantial ICT staff time for hardware upkeep, regular patching, and monitoring, alongside ongoing expenditure for physical power and cooling.

The Move to Cloud

To address these limitations, RBFRS began transitioning key systems to cloud-based hosting. Cloud solutions offered immediate scalability, reduced reliance on ageing physical infrastructure, and built-in resilience through geographically diverse data centres. This modernisation aimed to improve service continuity, enhance cyber security, and free ICT resources to focus on higher-value digital improvement work.

Real-World Benefits Demonstrated: Operation EREBUS

The value of cloud migration was demonstrated during Operation EREBUS, a major business continuity exercise designed to test RBFRS's readiness for significant ICT/facilities disruption.

Two cloud-hosted systems proved critical in maintaining operational effectiveness:

- **Finance System:**
  The finance platform, recently migrated to the cloud, remained fully functional throughout the exercise. Under the previous on-premises model, its operation would have required manual configuration changes or temporary workarounds to keep it available, as well as physical presence of all those requiring access at the secondary site. Cloud hosting eliminated this need, ensuring stable access to financial processes at a time when continuity was essential, including ongoing delivery of the new finance system.

- **HR and Availability System:**
  The HR and crewing/availability system also continued operating without intervention. During the exercise, the system required no emergency adjustments, ensuring staffing and resource information remained accessible. Its uninterrupted operation supported command decision-making and provided confidence in the Service's ability to maintain essential records under adverse conditions.

Outcomes

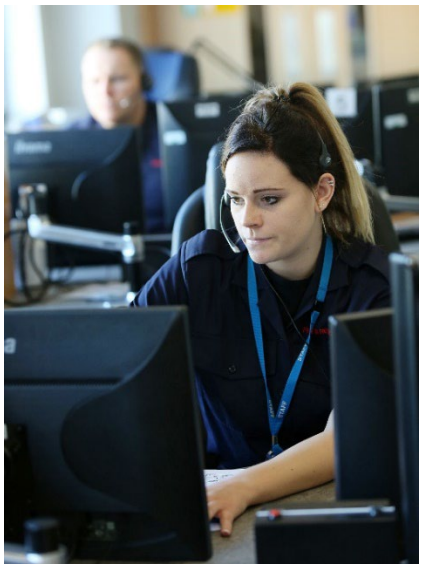
The cloud migration delivered several clear benefits during the exercise and beyond:

- **Improved Resilience:** Key systems remained accessible without the need for reactive technical work.

- **Operational Continuity:** Critical data—finance, HR, and availability was preserved and consistently available throughout the simulated disruption.
- **Reduced Maintenance Burden:** ICT teams were not required to implement temporary fixes typically associated with on-premises hosting during continuity events.
- **Greater Confidence in Future Migrations:** The success of these early moves validated the wider cloud-first direction.

RBFRS's shift from on-premises hosting to cloud-based services has already paid dividends. The continuity and stability demonstrated during Operation EREBUS show that cloud solutions materially enhance resilience and reduce operational risk. As more systems transition to the cloud, RBFRS is better positioned to deliver reliable, modern, and scalable digital services in support of its operational mission.

Thames Valley Fire Control Service



Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS), based at RBFRS' headquarters, was established in 2015 to answer 999 calls and mobilise fire engines to incidents across the Thames Valley. TVFCS operates on behalf of the three Thames Valley fire and rescue services, serving a combined population of over two million people.

This collaborative arrangement delivers a single joint emergency call handling, mobilising and resource management function, which has delivered significant cost efficiencies to all three fire and rescue services. As well as providing increased resilience, TVFCS continues to deliver efficiencies and improved performance. Since its establishment, TVFCS has brought about collective savings of over £1 million a year for the three Services.

As the critical Command & Control (C&C) system is now approaching end-of-life, with key infrastructure components becoming unsupported by 2029, a project is underway to replace the existing system with a modular cloud-enabled solution supporting continuity of statutory services, improved resilience and providing options for future innovation.

Funding will be required for the full system replacement, which will need to be fully tested and operational by April 2028. The Authority's share of the project costs which will be funded from the TVFCS Renewals Fund are shown below.

Authority's Share of TVFCS Project Costs

£'000	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
Dual running of system		134	269		403
Other technology costs	4	10	10	5	29
Internal project costs	34	100	92	59	285
Contingency	7	22	20	13	62
Total	**45**	**266**	**391**	**77**	**779**

Authority's Share of TVFCS Renewals Fund

£'000	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Opening Bal	480	485	309	8
Additional Contribution	50	90	90	90
Expenditure	-45	-266	-391	-77
Total	**485**	**309**	**8**	**21**

Financial Implications

As evidenced by the most recent HMICFRS inspection, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service has been judged ‘good’ in terms of making the Service affordable now and into the future.

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.

Based on the Authority’s current financial planning assumptions, projected capital expenditure over the next four years is affordable, though much will depend on future rates of inflation and in particular pay award settlements.

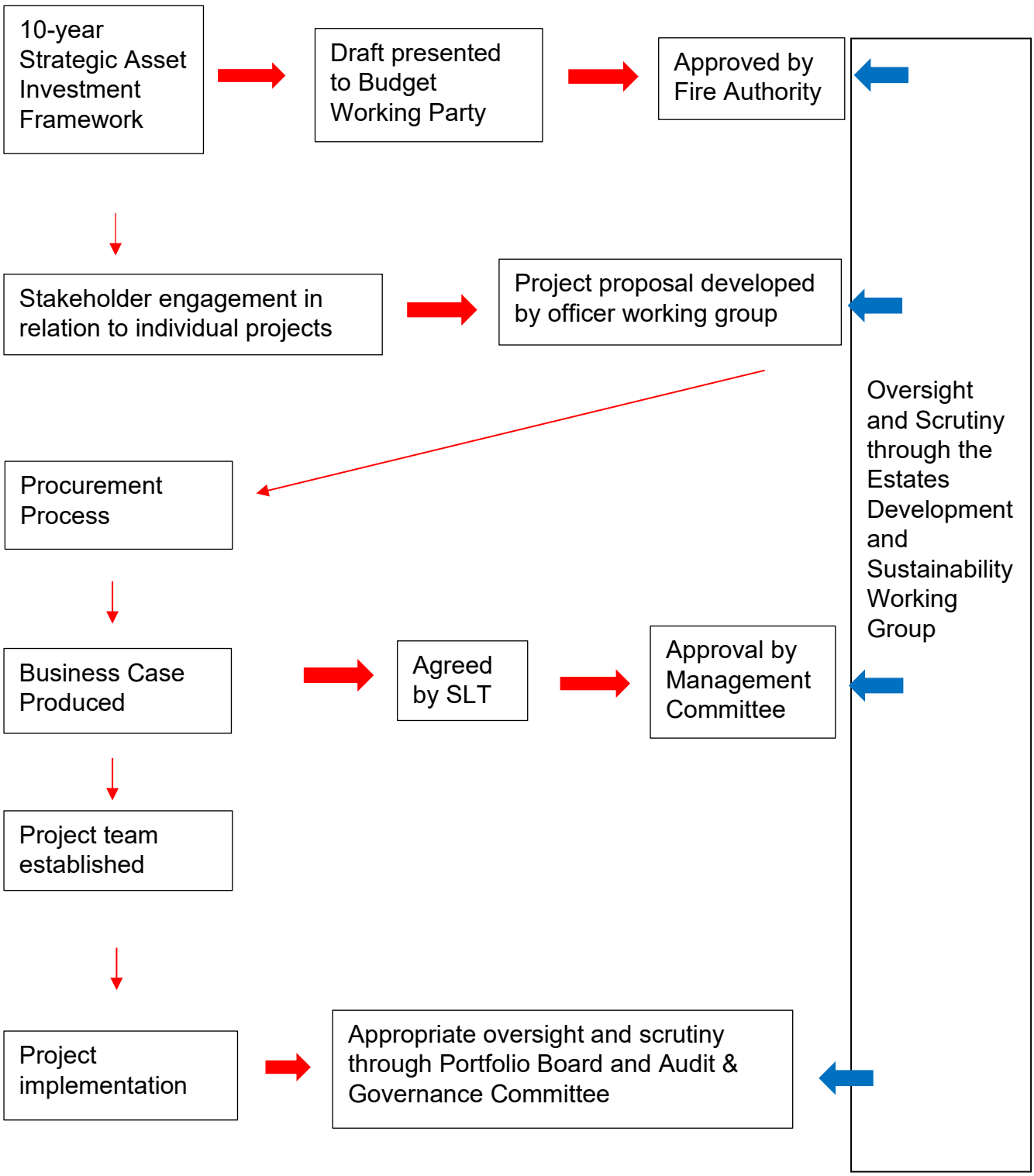
In terms of fleet and equipment and ICT capital expenditure the Authority will fund a proportion of this expenditure from its revenue budget. This is a prudent way to finance this type of expenditure given that such assets have shorter lives and therefore need replacing on a regular basis. It is also prudent given the shift from hosted to cloud-based ICT solutions.

From 2026/27 additional loans will be required to finance the capital programme. This will push up the ratio of financing costs as a proportion of the Revenue Budget but the ratio will still be below the ceiling of three per cent over the period of the MTFP as set out in the Treasury Strategy. Beyond this period and, where appropriate, we will seek to work with partners and other stakeholders to explore joint-venture options which could lead to the building of a new fire station at a reduced cost to the Authority.

Whilst recognising that novel approaches to enhancing our properties may be possible in some instances, it remains the case that such options will be limited. Therefore, it is critical that we move swiftly over the next four years to deliver capital programmes of work to current buildings that will generate future savings in the revenue budget.

Finally, given the capital-intensive nature of fire and rescue services, we are keen to see the establishment of a national Transformation Fund against which we could bid to secure funding for capital projects that are both environmentally sustainable and deliver savings in running costs.

Governance Arrangements



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