



Thames Valley Fire Control Service Joint Committee Meeting

Thursday, 10th December, 2015, 2.00 pm
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot,
Reading RG31 7SD

Minutes

- Present:** Councillor Paul Bryant, Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Councillor Andy Dransfield, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority
Councillor Judith Heathcoat, Oxfordshire County Council
Councillor Roger Reed (Vice-Chairman), Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority
Councillor Rodney Rose, Oxfordshire County Council
Councillor Angus Ross (Chairman), Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
- In Attendance:** Conor Bryne (Chief Financial Officer, RBFRS)
Mat Carlile (TVFCS Senior Responsible Owner / Area Manager, Oxfordshire FRS)
Samantha Chapman (Programme Manager, TVFCS)
Andy Fry (CFO, RBFRS)
Bryan Morgan (TVFCS Senior Responsible Owner / Area Manager, RBFRS)
Greg Smith (TVFCS Senior Responsible Owner / Area Manager, BMKFRS)
Paul Southern (ACFO, RBFRS)
Jason Thelwell (CFO, BMKFRS)
Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer, RBFRS)
- Public:** Mark Gaskarth (Gateway Review; Area Manager, Wiltshire FRS)
Control Staff
FBU Representatives

25. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Nathan Travis, and apologies for lateness were received from Chief Fire Officer, Jason Thelwell.

26. **INTRODUCTIONS**

All Members and Officers present introduced themselves. Mark Gaskarth from the Gateway Review was in attendance as an observer.

27. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

28. **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING ON 9 SEPTEMBER 2015**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2015 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendments below.

- (page 2) Councillor Andy Dransfield pointed out although the Joint Committee Terms of Reference states a member of the public shall interrupt or take part in the proceedings at any meeting, he suggested the Terms of Reference to be amended to receive questions from the public. The TVFC Joint Committee agreed to receive questions from the public at future meetings. In addition, the Chairman requested for an amendment to be made to the Terms of Reference to reflect this. BM
- (page 3) Amended misspelling of Crystal reporting FR
- (page 5) Amended misspelling of Anne-Marie Scott FR
- (page 7) Amended day of the December 2015 meeting to Thursday 10 December 2015 FR

29. **MATTERS ARISING**

Gateway Review - CFO Andy Fry (AF) reported Mark Gaskarth will be leading on the Gateway Review with colleagues from Hampshire, Wiltshire, Devon and Somerset and Gloucestershire which is due to commence in January 2016. In answer to a question, AF reported the above were selected based on their collective expertise to carry out the Peer Review on behalf of TVFCS.

Publication of agendas and minutes – The Chairman reported he was able to locate TVFCS Joint Committee papers on RBFRS website and BMKFRS SC

website; however it was difficult to locate in Oxfordshire County Council's website. Samantha Chapman (SC) reported she had put a request to add the committee papers to Oxfordshire's website and advised it would be added shortly.

Agenda Pack – Councillor Andy Dransfield requested for items in the agenda list to match the title of reports.

FR

30. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from the Public.

31. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

There were no questions from Members.

32. TVFCS PERFORMANCE AND CHANGES SINCE SEPTEMBER MEETING

Mat Carlile (MC) presented the report and made an amendment informing Members it was the second report on performance since going live on 23 April 2015. In taking Members through the report he outlined the following.

- Percentage of admin calls answered in 15 seconds had been a gradual improvement 82.71% in October 2015 compared to 83.56% in May 2015.
- Another improvement in the percentage of emergency calls answered within 5 seconds was 91.10% in October 2015 compared 89.01% in May 2015.
- MC reported all calls (emergency and calls received from alarm receiving centres) had been included in the percentage of emergency calls answered within 10 seconds which indicated a slight improvement of 97.28% in October 2015 compared to 96.95% in May 2015. Prior to TVFCS, only 999 calls had been counted.

Councillor Andy Dransfield requested scales in the line graph on the percentage of emergency calls were made similar to previous pages .eg. the vertical line from 88.00% upwards

- Another graph showed the percentage of mobilisation in 60 seconds which illustrated the time a call had been received from the time the resource was alerted. In terms of ways of working in the control room, OFRS used a method of pre-alert. RBFRS did not adopt this method prior to go-live and BMKFRS started using this method prior to go-live. MC reported TVFCS had been training staff to deal with pre-alert.

MC

MC informed the meeting that OFRS were changing their Response Standards for the first time which would assist in alerting the quickest resource. He gave Members the current and previous figures of the percentage of mobilisation in 90 seconds. MC reported that pre-alert should improve the figures presented in the report.

In referring to the above statement that pre-alert should improve the figures listed in the report, Councillor Andy Dransfield stated pre-alert should have improved the previous figures and asked why it was taking so long to mobilise appliances. In response, MC reported prior to go-live pre-alert was implemented by OFRS and BMKFRS. Greg Smith (GS) reported BMKFRS times had been slightly lower than OFRS due to a decision not to purchase a piece of equipment that brought mobilisation together.

Councillor Andy Dransfield queried why had the figures dropped compared to previous years in RBFRS and OFRS, on a like for like basis.

The Chairman felt there had been an expectation in relation to the figures and queried whether to discuss this later on in the agenda.

In response to a statement made by MC regarding the figures had not gotten worse, the Vice-Chairman stated if the figures had gotten worse there would be significant performance management issues that would need to be addressed.

Councillor Paul Bryant stated he felt the figures should have exceeded the previous figures prior to go-live by now.

The Chairman advised he expected further improvement in the figures by the next meeting of TVFCS Joint Committee and requested an item to be included on the agenda around target setting with the equipment we have got and a practical comparison of where we were before.

In referring to the percentage of mobilisations in 120 seconds, MC reported he expected to see an improvement in figures due to pre-alert. Members felt the above comment should be applied to all of the data presented in the report.

In response to a request from Councillor Andy Dransfield, BM confirmed he would circulate comparable figures of the average hours sick per Control FTE.

A planned temporary power supply outage exercise lasting seconds was held at this point in the meeting. ACFO Paul Southern (PS) explained separate from the rest of the building, TVFCS had an uninterrupted power supply of battery backup to sustain supply until the generators achieved full power.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

Co-
Ordination
Group

BM

33. **UPDATE ON THE DELIVERY OF OUTSTANDING ELEMENTS OF CAPITA SYSTEMS AND THEIR IMPACT ON PERFORMANCE / WORKLOADS - PRESENTATION BY SAMANTHA CHAPMAN**

Samantha Chapman (SC) provided a detailed presentation on the outstanding items which should have been delivered as part of the original implementation programme, which were:

1. Interface to Firewatch – Royal Berkshire is the only Service that uses Firewatch
2. CSI interface for DGNA
3. Attaching 999 audio to incident log
4. Risk information for Astrium MDT

In going through the list above, SC reported they did not have a direct impact on the ability of TVFCS to call handle or mobilise. In outlining incentives for Capita to deliver, she reported the retention of the full milestone payment £96,311.81 would be withheld until CSI interface for DGNA, Attaching 999 audio to incident log and Risk information for Astrium MDT had been delivered. Out of the milestone payment listed above, £25,000 would also be retained until Interface to Firewatch had been delivered.

SC reported Capita were sending through workplans on how the above four elements would be achieved and stated she had not received any indications they would not deliver.

In addition to the above four elements, SC reported there were seven items related to the original implementation that were not covered by the retention of payment agreement. Six had no direct impact on the ability of TVFCS to call handle or mobilise, of which two have been delivered and four remain outstanding from Capita.

One had caused issues for TVFCS staff when mobilising to incidents. As a result, TVFCS procured an alternative solution, due to the need for a resolution and failure by Capita to prove its solution was fit for purpose. In answer to a question, SC explained the programme budget would pay for the procurement.

The final part of the presentation listed the elements which caused disruption to the service.

Councillor Paul Bryant stated he found the presentation and the diagram on how the four elements link together extremely helpful and asked whether a session could be held for greater understanding.

In discussing the specific content of a possible session, SC agreed to arrange a separate session detailing the process of call handling. The session was proposed to be held prior to the next TVFCS Joint Committee on 21st March 2016.

SC

Councillor Andy Dransfield reported his concern on disruptions to the service, in particular Capita's installation of software changes and system restarts. He added TVFCS were receiving less calls than anticipated, however experienced the above problems. SC reported Capita attempted to load information, but had to stop as the system would not accept it. TVFCS had asked Capita to do a complete re-load. She advised Capita were now proactively monitoring the servers in order to identify problems as soon as they arose.

Members expressed their concerns on disruptions to the service.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

34. ISSUES LOG PROGRESS REPORT

Mat Carlile (MC) provided an update on the issues log. He reported there had been ways of working issues and listed the following:

Since go-live on 23rd April 2015 there were:

- 2081 issues
- 672 closed
- 355 new items
- 129 closed. No of issues relate to patch releases
- 19 change requests were dealt with
- Making sure secondary control in Kidlington went to plan. Adopting mobilising procedures agreed within the three services.

SC requested Members to note the issues log included issues that did not involve mobilising or call handling.

35. STAFFING UPDATE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Bryan Morgan presented the staffing report and outlined current staffing levels. He reported TVFCS had not gone up to full staffing numbers. The availability of staff in TVFCS had been reduced due to absences such as sickness, compensatory and annual leave, which had an impact on the availability of staff for training and for operational purposes.

To date there had been 7 recruitment campaigns and another one had been planned for the New Year.

To support the training needs of TVFCS, a member of staff from OFRS had extended their duties to provide assistance. Also Temporary Admin Support had been provided by RBFRS to support the Control Manager. The report recommended the 12 month extension of both posts until steady state. Currently there was 20 Control staff on development portfolios.

In answer to a question to explain the meaning of steady state, BM advised he would report back to this Committee, however to him steady state meant stable performance before the future options covered in the report e.g. demand lead crewing, a bank staff system and South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) mobilisation to co-responding calls could be considered.

He stated the report was seeking Members to agree the recommendations in the report from 2.1 to 2.7.

In answer to the Chairman's query on what would be the impact if Members did not agree the 12 month extension of Training Support Officer and Admin support post, BM responded by reporting the posts would improve the service. However, if it was not agreed by Members he would suggest 24 month extensive training. He stated there was a need to get Control to 'steady state' which would depend on the direction of Members of this Committee and what progress they would like officers to report back by the next meeting or the latter meeting in July 2016.

In response to the Vice-Chairman, Paul Southern (PS) reported it would take 24 months to get personnel trained. He added, the Programme Sponsoring Group (PSG) had agreed additional resource would be provided in year 1, until steady state. PS also stated current staff numbers needed to be maintained.

The Vice-Chairman stated there had been £80k underspend in 2015/16 against the full year budget which did not take into account the late cut over in April. He stated he did not feel the underspend should be used for the above posts. Councillor Andy Dransfield also stated the underspend should not be used due to TVFCS did not start on time.

AF acknowledged the three week late cut over, however, he stated the report was seeking Members to invest in the above posts for one year only.

The Vice-Chairman queried the suitability of 7 members of staff offered permanent roles as there had been absence due to sickness. PS reported staff offered permanent positions were suitable and it was not the same members of staff that were absent due to ill health.

Councillor Judith Heathcoat queried when did officers think TVFCS would get to steady state, and agreed with the sentiment that the underspend did not necessarily need to be spent just because it was available.

In referring to the appendix of the report (Output from the Erlang C Model), Councillor Andy Dransfield pointed out the bar graph identified at its peak most calls per 30 minutes were 4 and queried TVFCS were currently looking at 8 Control staff plus a Control Manager per watch. He felt the graph illustrating the above numbers of staff were not required, and queried the reason for additional staff.

Councillor Andy Dransfield also pointed to Table 1 in the report and felt the ratio of Crew Manager to Firefighter Control was too large. He queried the number of managers that were training and the reason why training was not carried out at a time of day when there were a low number of calls. He stated TVFCS had sufficient staff numbers and felt staff training could be completed within 6 months.

The Chairman felt the above point should be addressed as it seemed there was capacity and need to support training.

BM reported the training in question was for new Crew Manager's and System training. The issues log that occurred also requires staff training. He explained the training provided allowed staff to understand how the systems worked. He advised in 24 months development portfolios of those individuals would be cleared. Training and system issues would run in tandem and reported TVFCS would like an additional 12 months to achieve this.

Councillor Andy Dransfield did not accept the above explanation; neither did he accept the above resources and timescales were required.

BM advised TVFCS could identify an existing staff member or could go out to advert to recruit an ex-Control staff member on a 12 month contract.

In answer to Councillor Judith Heathcoat whether it was necessary to go to advert, BM reported; although TVFCS knew ex-Control staff members, it would have to go to advert.

The Chairman reminded the Committee the request for the above two posts were only for 12 months and that Members and Officers were trying to get the Service to perform.

PS reported the control room environment was not as it should be as yet and suggested regular progress reports could be provided to the Committee to achieve a level of assurance.

In answer to the Chairman, AF reported TVFCS required well trained motivated workforce in the Control room. Currently TVFCS had a high turnover of staff. He reported additional training resource was required alternatively; the Service could wait up to 24 months to get to where we want it to be. He stated from a personal view, he would prefer a dedicated administrator; however 12 months would enable TVFCS to get to steady state.

Councillor Rodney Rose felt to wait up 24 months was unacceptable and TVFCS required competent trained staff to get to steady state in the shortest time.

Councillor Andy Dransfield reiterated the number of calls that were coming in had been less than anticipated three years ago.

Action

The Chairman requested figures on the number of calls to be circulated and had asked officers to note the comments made regarding steady state.

BM

Members requested modelling to be done in parallel and asked for a report on a strategic plan on staffing at the next meeting.

BM

CFO Jason Thelwell (JT) felt the definition of steady state in 2.7 of the recommendation was unclear and suggested it should not be agreed until the next meeting in March.

BM

An amendment to include 'maximum' was made to items 2.3 and 2.4 of the recommendations of the report. Members agreed not to approve recommendation 2.5 until the budget was approved later in the agenda. The Chairman moved the amended recommendation from 2.1 -2.4 and 2.6-2.7. It was seconded by Councillor Rodney Rose and carried 4 to 2.

Resolved:

- That the current situation within the TVFCS affecting staffing levels be noted.
- That the actions by Officers to support TVFCS staffing arrangements be noted.
- That the introduction of a Training Support Officer for a maximum of 12 months, at a cost of up to £44,443.00 be agreed.
- That the introduction of an admin support post for a maximum of 12 months, at a cost of up to £25,000.00.
- That a strategic staffing plan be brought to the next TVFCS Joint Committee be agreed be agreed.
- That subject to the agreement of term 'steady state' at the next TVFCS Joint Committee meeting, not to implement alternative staffing models until 'steady state' has been achieved for at least 6 months be agreed.

BM

BM

BM

36. PROPOSED PERFORMANCE TARGETS

The Chairman requested this item be moved to the next TVFCS Joint Committee in March 2016 as time was limited and the Budget item must take priority.

SC

37. GATEWAY REVIEW UPDATE

Members were informed the Gateway Review would commence in January

FR

2016 and the review would be carried out by colleagues from neighbouring FRS's. Findings from the review would be presented at the next TVFCS Joint Committee in March 2016.

38. **2015/16 BUDGET UPDATE AND EXPECTED OUTTURN**

BM reported TVFCS were estimating £81,000 under budget by year end due to go-live only occurring three weeks into the current financial year.

In referring to 3.5 of his report, he advised TVFCS were trying to get a better deal from Thames Valley Police in national rate calls (increased SMS messaging for Officer mobilisation and Airwave charges for radio usage). BM agreed to update the Committee on the progress of the charges of national rate calls at the next TVFCS meeting in March 2016 and to include the missing column in the budget spreadsheet.

BM

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

39. **PROPOSED 2016/17 BUDGET**

BM reported TVFCS were seeking Members to agree the 2016/17 budget of £2,084,607. He outlined the above figure covered the increase in staffing costs, as well as a 1% pay increase for existing staff members. Year 1 did not include a training budget; therefore a training budget had been included. He also stated the budget included the running costs for technology as there had been an increase in maintenance.

In referring to staffing, BM reported Royal Berkshire would reduce staffing levels in Year 2, due to the restructure of the organisation in Year 1.

In answer to the Vice-Chairman regarding whether it was wise to reduce the overtime budget in 2016/17, BM reported TVFCS did not forecast the same levels of absence would continue and had highlighted an improvement in the levels of absence in November 2015.

In referring to 3.13 of the report, Councillor Andy Dransfield stated year 2 savings were in part based upon the assumption of a reduction in staff numbers by one per watch (from 9 to 8). He stated the government were expecting to see an efficiency gain and suggested to freeze the budget.

The Chairman stated the original budget preparation had not been as well informed on likely costs in the first year and also stated each FRS had already made a saving compared to if all had kept their individual Control rooms. He also stated there was an £99,000 increase in the 2016/17 budget and he did not want officers automatically to spend up to that increased amount.

Councillor Andy Dransfield moved an amended recommendation to freeze the budget and it was seconded by Councillor Paul Bryant.

JT reported TVFCS required a longer term financial plan in order to see year on year savings and suggested a 4 year financial and staffing plan. AF supported this view as well as stated the proposal / recommendation made by officers had been based on their expertise.

The Chairman put the amended recommendation to freeze the budget to the vote. Two Members voted for and four voted against. The amended recommendation was lost.

The Chairman put the recommendation from item 11 (2.5) to agree posts (Training Support Officer) and (Admin Support post) be funded from the predicted underspend from year one of TVFCS to the vote. Four Members were for the recommendation and two against. The recommendation from Item 11 (2.5) was carried.

The Chairman moved the amended recommendation added clarification that the Budget had to be approved by each constituent authority and included the item deferred from Item 11. It was seconded by the Vice-Chairman and agreed by 5 votes to 1.

Resolved:

- That the TVFCS budget for the 2016/17 financial year of £2,084,607 be agreed.
- That it was agreed the three respective Fire Authorities recommend the above TVFCS budget for steady state operation for the financial year 2016/17, and the individual Fire Authorities' contributions to this budget.
- That the posts in Item 11 (2.3 Training Support Officer) and (2.4 Admin Support post) be funded for a maximum of one year from the predicted underspend arising from year one of TVFCS be agreed.
- That a longer term (3 or 5 year) financial plan be prepared for a future meeting.

BM

40. **FORWARD PLAN**

Members requested the following items be included in the forward plan.

- Staffing
- Financial Plan – longer term as above
- An update from the three Fire Authority's on approval of the 2016/17 budget

FR

41. **DISCUSSION ON JOINT COMMITTEE 'TERMS OF REFERENCE'
SCHEDULE 3 OF LEGAL AGREEMENT**

Members requested Officers make the relevant changes to the Terms of Reference discussed earlier in the agenda.

BM

42. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

43. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING (S)**

- Monday 21st March 2016, 2.00pm at RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading RG31 7SD.
- July 2016 – Date and time to be confirmed.

The meeting will be held at Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service, Headquarters, Stocklake, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP20 1BD.

The meeting ended at 4.20pm