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THAMES VALLEY FIRE CONTROL SERVICE JOINT COMMITTEE



MEETING: Thames Valley Fire Control Service Joint Committee Meeting

DATE AND TIME: Monday, 12th July, 2021 at 2.00 pm

VENUE: Lynda Kenyon Suite
RBFRS Headquarters
Newsham Court
Pincent's Kiln
Calcot
Reading, Berkshire RG31 7SD

S U M M O N S

You are hereby summoned to attend the meeting of the Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) Joint Committee at the time, date and venue indicated above, when it is proposed to deal with the business set out in the enclosed Agenda.

A light buffet will be available.

GRAHAM BRITTEN
Monitoring Officer

To: Members of the Thames Valley Fire Control Service Joint Committee:

Councillor David Cannon
Councillor Neil Fawcett
Councillor Glynis Phillips

Councillor Lesley Clarke OBE
Councillor Steven Lambert
Councillor Angus Ross

Copy to: Officer attendees of the TVFCS Joint Committee (Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Services)

THAMES VALLEY FIRE CONTROL SERVICE JOINT COMMITTEE



Thames Valley Fire Control Service Joint Committee Meeting

Monday, 12th July, 2021 at 2.00 pm

**Lynda Kenyon Suite, RBFRS Headquarters
Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln,
Calcot, Reading, Berkshire RG31 7SD**

AGENDA

	Item	Page No.
1.	Election of 2021/22 Chairman	
2.	Appointment of 2021/22 Vice-Chairman	
3.	Apologies	
4.	Declarations of Interest	
5.	Minutes and recorded actions of the last meeting held on 14 December 2020	(Pages 5 - 14)
6.	Questions from Members (written questions)	
7.	Matters Arising	

	Item	Start time
8.	Questions submitted under Standing Order 9.5 (questions from members of the public)	
9.	Receipt of Announcements	
10.	Chairman's Annual Report 2020/21 - for note	(Pages 15 - 20)
11.	Thames Valley Fire Control Mobilising Requirements - to agree	(Pages 21 - 26)
12.	Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) Cost Apportionment Review - for note	(Pages 27 - 32)
13.	TVFCS Quarter Three and Quarter Four 2020/21 Performance Reports - for note	(Pages 33 - 82)
14.	Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme - verbal update - for note	
15.	TVFCS Joint Committee September 2021 Workshop - to agree A Members and Officers Workshop will be held on Thursday 16 September 2021, 11.30am at Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) Headquarters. (This meeting is not open to the public).	
16.	Forward Plan - for note	(Pages 83 - 84)
17.	Date of Next Meeting Thursday 16 December 2021, 2pm at RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincent's Kiln, Reading, Berkshire RG31 7SD.	

Joint Committee Terms of Reference

1. REMIT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE

- 1.1. The Joint Committee is constituted to provide overall strategic direction and oversight for the TVFCS.
- 1.2. The Joint Committee shall have the following functions:
 - 1.2.1. champion the TVFCS;
 - 1.2.2. act as the link between the TVFCS and the Fire Authorities ;
 - 1.2.3. guide recommendations from the TVFCS, that may affect the operational functions of the Fire Authorities, through the governance processes of the Fire Authorities;
 - 1.2.4. assist with the management of the relationships between the Fire Authorities;
 - 1.2.5. monitor the steady state operational benefits and performance of the TVFCS, against the agreed measures and targets;
 - 1.2.6. monitor steady state risks relevant to the TVFCS;
 - 1.2.7. monitor the financial performance of the TVFCS against required and available budget, benefits and efficiencies, and to contribute to the financial processes of the Fire Authorities;
 - 1.2.8. discuss, and contribute to, proposals on future developments for the TVFCS;
 - 1.2.9. provide strategic direction on the future of the TVFCS;
 - 1.2.10. consider and recommend to the Fire Authorities proposals in relation to Fire Authority Decisions including but not limited to:
 - (b) discuss and recommend proposals for additional full partners into the TVFCS;
 - (c) discuss and recommend proposals for the supply of TVFCS services to other fire and rescue services or other clients;
 - 1.2.11. decide upon and determine all matters which are Joint Committee Decisions, any matters referred to the Joint Committee for decision pursuant to the TVFCS decision making process in clause 11 (Decision Making by TVFCS) and any matters reserved by law or otherwise to the Joint Committee.



Thames Valley Fire Control Service Joint Committee Annual Meeting

Monday 14th December 2020, 2pm, a remote Microsoft Teams meeting hosted by
Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service

Minutes

Present: Councillor Judith Heathcoat (OCC) - Chairman
Councillor Mark Gray (OCC)
Councillor Lesley Clarke, OBE (BMKFA)
Councillor Steven Lambert (BMKFA)
Councillor Angus Ross (RBFA)
Councillor David Cannon (RBFA)

In Attendance: Rob MacDougall (Chief Fire Officer, OFRS)
Michael Adcock (Area Manager, OFRS)
Christine Barefield (Personal Assistant, OFRS)
Trevor Ferguson (Chief Fire Officer, RBFRS)
Jim Powell (Area Manager RBFRS)
Simon Harris (Group Manager, TVFCS)
Jason Thelwell (Chief Fire Officer, BFRS)
Dave Norris (Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience, BFRS)
Conor Byrne (Head of Finance, RBFRS)
Graham Britten (Director of Legal and Governance, BFRS)
Asif Hussain (Principal Accountant, BFRS)

Public: Live webcast broadcast: <https://oxon.cc/TVFCSJC14122020>

01. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Steve Foye.

02. INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman asked Members and Officers to introduce themselves as they present to committee.

03. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

04. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21ST SEPTEMBER 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st September 2020 were agreed as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2020 be signed as an accurate record by the Chairman.

05. MATTERS ARISING

Cllr Ross asked whether the Joint Committee would receive further information on the work regarding Automatic Fire Alarms at future meetings. The Head of Prevention, Resilience and Response (BFRS) confirmed that this is an ongoing piece of work between the three Fire and Rescue Services in the Thames Valley. The group are reviewing the existing policies and procedures to formalise some evaluation and to determine the next steps. It is anticipated that this piece of work will take a few months to complete whilst the full extent of the evaluation is considered, and further updates will be brought to this Committee. Cllr Clarke sought clarification that the letter of appreciation had been sent to the TVFC staff as agreed at the last meeting. The Head of Prevention, Resilience and Response (BFRS) confirmed that the letter had been sent in mid-November following approval and, that it had been well received by the staff who were touched that, despite the fact physical visits are not possible, they are still in the mind of the Members.

06. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS (WRITTEN QUESTIONS)

None.

07. QUESTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER STANDING ORDER 9.5

None

08. TVFCS BUDGET 2021/22

Conor Byrne provided the Committee with the proposed budget for Thames Valley Fire Control (TVFCS) for the 2021/22 financial year. The proposed budget shows a total budget of £2,410.447 which is an increase of 2.35%. Employment costs make up 75% of the budget and due to the recent announcement of the public sector pay freeze, no general pay award has been built in to the 2021/22 budget. The Committee were advised that a rise of 2.1% has been placed into the budget based on a number of staff being forecast to move from the development pay rate onto the fully competent rate for their roles. For the Firefighter (Control) role the pay increase is 28% on achieving competence. Recharges are set each year to cover the cost of support services to TVFCS, and the recharge in relation to HR and Learning and Development is increasing by 10.96% to reflect the costs of providing Benenden health cover to staff as well as additional support around EDI and training. The recharge for Liability Insurance has increased by £3,825. RBFA has recently renewed its insurance arrangements with the liability element increasing by £51,000 due to recent events and the hardening of the market.

Conor Byrne advised that looking forward, it is expected that activity associated with IT hardware and software refreshes will lead to increased resource requirements from RBFRS ICT on a project support basis. When such costs are known they will be built into the medium-term financial plans. Unicorn network costs have risen by 7.75% as a result of BT identifying a historic issue where they have not been billing TVFCS for the network connection between Calcot and Stocklake. No payments are being sought from BT in respect of previous years, but the correct cost for this network link will be billed going forward.

The medium-term financial plan has been produced and provided ahead of the meeting. Future salary awards from 2022/23 have been shown as 1% per annum. Other lines have been inflated at a rate of 2% per annum, which reflects the UK Governments target inflation rate. It is hoped that as we move into 2021/22, the longer-term funding position for the fire sector will become clearer which in turn will allow more detailed work to be undertaken on the MTFP to ensure alignment with the funding envelope.

With reference to capital, it was recommended that each partner continues to set aside £50,000 each financial year towards capital replacement costs. The fund currently has in excess of £1.75m, including the contributions made by partners in 2020/21. Plans for a mini hardware refresh during 2021/22 are progressing with a Members' workshop scheduled for March 2021. Costs and detailed specifications are currently being worked on but, estimates to date suggest a cost of around £350,000. Looking further ahead, once there is more clarity on ESN, it will be necessary to commission a piece of work in preparation for a tender for a complete system refresh. Cllr Clarke asked if this could be an agenda item for the March Workshop as there are a lot of things

going on particularly in the IT world and, with the amount of money in the fund and the possibility of having to put in a lot more, this should be an agenda item to enable it to be explored fully and understand what the IT refresh would be, what it will entail, how it is going to be done and the costs involved. The Chairman supported this proposal as a sensible way forward. The Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience (BFRS) thanked Cllr Clarke for raising this as a sensible question not only for the paper but also looking forward to the medium-term planning for TVFCS. The Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience (BFRS) added that it was a sensible suggestion to add the capital strategy to the March Workshop for which preparations are already being made to look at the hardware and software refreshes over the short to medium term, some of the resourcing implications and how this attributes to TVFCS. He went on to suggest that providing additional context around the funding mechanisms currently in place and how well set up they are for the future would be entirely sensible. The Senior Responsible Officer Team will take this forward to work up the proposals.

SRO's to work on expenditure proposals.

Cllr Ross suggested that it was clear there is now a far more established preparation of the budget and all the corporate costs are now more refined enabling more confidence in them. Looking forward, Cllr Ross supported the suggestion of having the budget on the agenda. He also felt that having a separate capital plan going forward was of benefit to enable the Committee to continue the position as things become more certain in view of the long term needs of supporting the Control Room.

The Chairman asked if there were any plans/schemes for raising income and, if so, could they be brought forward to future meetings. The Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience (BFRS) advised that this is discussed regularly and, had been discussed at a previous meeting with the view of building on past successes and, this is kept under review. SROs to bring income generation ideas to the September workshop. The Chairman suggested that this may assist with balancing against the risks faced viz-a-viz funding and the implications of Covid.

SRO's to bring income ideas to September Workshop.

RESOLVED –

That the Joint Committee agreed the recommendations in the report.

09. TVFCS PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR QUARTER 2 – 2021/22

The Chairman opened this item by suggesting that, whilst the report has been designated as a work in progress, the TVFCS has developed at an exceptional rate and, the performance report has matured over time and has now come of age. The Head of Prevention, Resilience and Response (BFRS) thanked the Chairman for her kind words on the report and advised that any further suggestions on improving the report were welcome.

The Head of Prevention, Resilience and Response (BFRS) commenced his presentation by discussing operational context. Operational activity has been shaped by the national response to the Covid19 pandemic. The focus has

continued to be on safeguarding the health and wellbeing of TVFCS staff, whilst maintaining a first- class service for our Fire & Rescue Services and our communities. The relaxation of the government's COVID restrictions in July and August, allowed staff to take planned holidays and resume other activities. The reduction in demand on TVFCS seen in Q1 has continued during Q2, in terms of both calls received and consequent resource mobilisations compared with the equivalent period in 2019/20 and 2018/19. This reduction is believed to be linked to the societal and behavioural changes resulting from the response to COVID19, the consequent impacts on the number of journeys made and lower levels of economic activity. Anecdotally, TVFCS staff are reporting an increase in emergency calls where mental health and wellbeing is believed to be a factor in the decision to call 999.

Two weather events impacted TVFCS during the quarter in August and September, where high volumes of rainfall were experienced over relatively short time periods which did create pressure on staff whilst receiving these calls.

The Joint Coordination Group and the TVFCS management team, have commenced work to plan, coordinate and resource the significant level of activity which will need to be undertaken over the next two years and beyond in terms of the hardware and software refreshes. Preparation also continues along with engagement on the national workstream addressing issues such as the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and, broader national work to facilitate the adoption of the Emergency Services Network. Some early scoping work does suggest that resourcing will be stretched and, this will continue to be monitored. Officers have received the Capita system upgrade report, outlining the implications of an extension to the existing contract for the command and control system in August in line with contractual timelines. The Joint Coordination Group are engaging with FRS technical teams, the TVFCS management team, and Capita, over the detail of the report, to ensure clarity on the proposal before bringing recommendations to members.

Moving on to resourcing, The Head of Prevention, Resilience and Response (BFRS) advised that recruitment activity to fill the two vacancies caused by staff resignations during Q1 took place ahead of schedule, with the successful candidates starting their initial training in September and joining their new teams during the last week of October 2020. The number of applicants for these vacancies were considerably higher than has previously been experienced for equivalent roles and several suitable candidates were identified over and above the current requirement. TVFCS managers are exploring how we can engage with these individuals should further vacancies arise. Sickness levels in the second quarter of 2020/21 increased compared with both the previous quarter and the equivalent quarter in 2019/20. Whilst the number of short-term sickness absences was consistent with normal seasonal variation, two long term absences had a significant effect on the overall number of days lost in July and August. One staff member has now returned to full duties whilst the other has begun a phased return to the workplace whilst they continue to receive appropriate treatment for their health and medical needs. As in previous years, all TVFCS staff will be offered access to a free influenza vaccination during autumn 2020. The Head of

Prevention, Response and Resilience (BFRS) advised the Committee that no sickness absence has occurred during the quarter as a result of COVID19 infection however; during September a number of staff were required to self-isolate as a result of COVID symptoms. The Chairman asked whether, Officers felt that the increase of applicants may be TVFCS being a beneficiary of Covid19 where people may have been made redundant and potentially looking for a career. The Head of Service suggested that this may be a factor along with the fact that people are re-evaluating their future careers. In addition, The Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience (BFRS) also suggested that TVFCS is viewed as a great place to work and, could therefore be attracting people. This view was supported by The Group Manager (TVFCS) who suggested that people are looking at the type of work they want to do in the future. The Chairman gave a health warning and suggested that there needs to be some work undertaken to ensure staff retention when we are investing on training people. This discussion led on to the element of the report which showed that the quarter had seen an increase of staff moving through the development programmes to competent status.

The Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience (BFRS) took the Committee through the newer section of the report looking at Prevention and Protection. TVFCS staff have contributed to prevention activity during the quarter through the identification and referral of 30 residents of the Thames Valley with defective smoke alarms in their homes and through the handling of 37 safeguarding notifications. Most issues with defective domestic smoke alarms are as a result of the device's battery becoming flat, causing it to sound. Safeguarding issues can either be identified by TVFCS when dealing with callers or, following attendance at an address where crews will notify TVFCS that a safeguarding issue has been identified. All TVFCS staff receive regular mandatory training relating to the safeguarding of both adults and children to assist them with this aspect of their work. TVFCS also deal with notifications from partner agencies, primarily Thames Valley Police, when a credible threat of arson has been received against a person or premises and action needs to be urgently taken. The notifications are then passed to the relevant FRS to be dealt with in line with their respective procedures. During Q2 2021/21 TVFCS have processed 1 notification of this type however; TVFCS have been notified of threats against 19 other addresses during the period which have been passed via other routes. Once suitable inspections have been carried out at premises where an arson threat has been received appropriate measures are then applied to the premises. TVFCS will normally be asked to take additional actions should a call to the address be received. This may involve increasing the number of appliances sent to the address or, making urgent contact with the Police and other agencies. The Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience (BFRS) advised the Committee that, whilst additional appliances may be mobilised, this is contributing to the wider public protection agenda.

Cllr Clarke asked whether any joint fire investigation work takes place. The Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience (BFRS) confirmed that joint working does take place. Cllr Clarke went on to highlight her concerns on the numbers of firefighters and, other emergency services workers, who are being attacked. She asked for reassurance that the correct level of action is taken.

The Group Manager (TVFCS) advised that, attacks on firefighters in the Thames Valley are exceptionally rare however; TVFCS have processes in place to record such instances and these are then reported to the Home Office.

Cllr Ross raised a question on data management and, the Area Manager (RBFRS) provided both an update on the data processing element with TVFCS plus reassurance that this is completed as quickly as possible.

The Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience (BFRS) took the Committee through the performance targets for response. This measure examines call waiting times by looking at the performance of TVFCS staff when answering emergency calls. It sets two targets for how quickly control operators should pick up an emergency call when it comes into the control room. We measure whether a call is picked up within 5 or 10 seconds and the expected performance is that this will be done on 92% or 97% of occasions respectively. Performance against these targets is very good and the targets are routinely exceeded. In reality this means that the majority (97% or more) of all emergency calls that come into TVFCS will be picked in 10 seconds or less. The actual figures for quarter 2 show that, on average, control operators picked up 95.78% of all emergency call within 5 seconds and 98.03% of all emergency calls within 10 seconds. The small number of occasions where these times are exceeded are associated with periods of higher demand where a number of calls are received simultaneously, this can be as a result of a large number of calls being received in a relatively short period of time, either as a result of a single incident which is visible to a large number of people e.g. a fire involving grass on the side of a major road) or as a result of environmental conditions affecting large numbers of people simultaneously, such as exceptionally heavy rainfall causing flooding. TVFCS saw an improvement in performance against this measure in July compared with Q1, however performance then declined in August and September. It is expected that call handling times are expected to increase slightly during the summer months, as more calls to outdoor locations are received which involve extended questioning of the caller and the use of location identification technology to ensure that the most appropriate resources are mobilised, however the drop in performance in August and September was more pronounced than anticipated. Analysis of the data and interviews conducted with control room staff indicate that TVFCS continue to experience difficulties when handling calls relating to alarms in industrial, commercial, retail and public assembly premises. The call challenge procedure operated by TVFCS on behalf of OFRS and RBFRS for these premises requires TVFCS to contact the premises to ascertain whether the alarm can be confirmed as 'false' before mobilising a response. The changes to the occupation of these premises as a result of COVID19 has meant that it has been more difficult to contact responsible persons on site to carry out the required checks before a mobilisation takes place. During the quarter, TVFCS successfully challenged 904 emergency calls. In addition to calls to alarms where FRS attendance is not required in Oxfordshire or Royal Berkshire, this figure also includes a large number of calls to other incident types where, through extended questioning of the caller, it is identified that an agency other than the Fire & Rescue Service is more appropriate to provide the assistance that the caller requires. Whilst this

call challenge process can lead to extended call handling times, it is a vital aspect of the overall response strategy of the FRS as it preserves the availability of resources to attend incidents where life and property are threatened and simultaneously reduces the risk posed to the public and firefighters when responding to incidents under 'blue light' conditions. The increase in the number of calls challenged in Q2 compared with Q1 was predominantly as a result of the number of flooding calls received during the heavy rainfall events mentioned elsewhere in this report, where it was determined that the FRS was not the most appropriate agency to assist. Road traffic collisions typically take longer to locate than many other incidents as Callers are often not familiar with the area they travelling in, and are often only able to pinpoint their location as being between two notable points, for example roundabouts or other landmarks, which can make identifying a precise location challenging. A large number of calls to road traffic collisions are passed to TVFCS by the Police or Ambulance Service, which means that assistive technology for location identification such as BT Advanced Mobile Location cannot be used. Although the average call handling time for these incidents remains under 90 seconds, an increase can be seen compared with 2019/20. The TVFCS Management team are now analysing data in relation to these types of incident with a view to identifying factors that may be inhibiting performance.

The Committee discussed the 80% target. Cllr Ross suggested that there is a balance to be struck between getting the appliance out of the door with some information missing or against, waiting until the full information is available. Cllr Lambert advised that he would not want to tie-up Officers time chasing, what is in effect, 2-3 seconds off of the target and The Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience (BFRS) advised that the SRO's will continue to monitor this target to understand why we are not reaching the target.

Cllr Ross advised the Committee that the Fire Authority in Royal Berkshire had recently attended a virtual session with the Area Manager (RBFRS) and the Group Manager (TVFCS) which had been very informative and, he encouraged the other Services to do the same. The Area Manager (RBFRS) advised that this session was in lieu of a virtual tour and would be offered to the other Services in the New Year.

The Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience (BFRS) highlighted resilience to the Committee. TVFCS plans include a quarterly full evacuation exercise, with staff relocating to the secondary control room facility at Kidlington. Due to the restrictions associated with COVID19, the physical evacuation exercises have been suspended and replaced with simulated evacuation exercises. On 29th September 2020, a business resilience exercise took place simulating an unplanned evacuation to Kidlington, where TVFCS calls needed to be diverted to the Staffordshire & West Midlands Fire Control (S&WMFC). During the exercise, S&WMFC staff correctly identified and notified the appropriate Thames Valley Resources for each call passed to them, using the agreed resilient 'fall back' systems and notionally managed incidents in line with Thames Valley procedure. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID19 pandemic, TVFCS and S&WMFC have been able to maintain their programme of resilience testing, which is now well embedded.

The Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience (BFRS) advised the Committee that an information sharing agreement has been signed between the three FRS and Thames Valley Police to facilitate a more effective means of receiving data in relation to some high-risk domestic premises. This will improve the speed with which relevant information to assist responding crews is added to the Command & Control system.

The Area Manager (RBFRS) took the Committee through the Budget Summary element of the performance report and reported on the lines that showed a variance worthy of note. With reference to employment costs, the variance is due to staff movement during quarter 1 and the Covid related delay in recruitment which has continued to have an impact on the budget into quarter 2. The other line worthy of note related to the Capita Mobilisation System where payments were received from Capita during quarter 2 representing credits for failure to rectify a number of minor faults. TVFCS received the credits all at the same time. These credits can be used to obtain services and upgrades from Capita over and above those set out in the contract. The Area Manager (RBFRS) advised that training will be sourced using these credits however; this needs to be face-to-face which has obviously been delayed; this will be put in place as soon as practical.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience (BFRS) for a sound report which has been easy to read and understand.

RESOLVED –

That the Joint Committee noted the contents of the report.

10. APPROVAL OF MEETING DATES FOR 2021/22

The Committee noted the 2021/22 meeting dates for the TVFCS Joint Committee, TVFCS Joint Committee Workshop and the Thames Valley Steering Group Workshop.

Cllr Ross highlighted that the date on the forward plan was wrong for July 2021 and, the plan will be amended to reflect the correct date of 13th July 2021.

RESOLVED –

That the Committee noted the dates of the meetings and Workshops.

11. FORWARD PLAN

It was noted that the Lead Officer for the Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme from July 2021 will be Assistant Chief Fire Officer Jo Bowcock, OFRS.

Cllr Clarke suggested that it would be helpful to include the dates of the workshops on the forward plan however; the Chairman suggested that this would need to be under a separate heading as they are not public meetings.

RESOLVED –

That the Forward Plan be updated.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

A Members Workshop will be held on Monday 22nd March 2021.

The date of the next TVFCS Joint Committee meeting is Tuesday 13th July 2021 at 2:00 pm.

(The Chairman closed the meeting at 3.15 pm)

THAMES VALLEY FIRE CONTROL SERVICE



SUBJECT	ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21
PRESENTED TO:	TVFCS JOINT COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	12 JULY 2021
LEAD OFFICER	AREA MANAGER JAMES POWELL
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NOT APPLICABLE
ACTION	TO NOTE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To provide a high-level summary of Thames Valley Fire Control (TVFCS) activity during the year 2020/21.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Joint Committee:

- 2.1 **NOTE** the Annual Report.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 An annual report is produced each year by the outgoing Chairman of the TVFCS Joint Committee. In 2020/21, this was Councillor Judith Heathcote (OCC).
- 3.2 This report will provide a high-level overview of control room activity and any progress made in relation to service plans and performance, including a look at staffing and a summary of the financial position at year end. Finally, it will provide a look forward to 2021/22 and the key areas of work required to continue making improvements to TVFCS on behalf of the three Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services (FRS).
- 3.3 TVFCS has and continues to be the flagship of collaboration in the region and went live in April 2015. The control centre handles calls and mobilises resources for the three Thames Valley FRS.

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- 3.4 Governance of TVFCS is undertaken by elected members, two from each contributing authority, who form the TVFCS Joint Committee. Senior Responsible Officers (SRO) from each TV FRS form the Joint Coordinating Group (JCG) and support the control manager to monitor and manage performance, reporting into the Joint Committee.
- 3.5 The service utilises a single employer model with a single mobilising system, which has delivered significant cost efficiencies to all three authorities. Increased resilience, efficiency and improved performance will result in collective savings of over £1 million a year for the next 15 years. Overall, the combined services are projected to achieve total savings of £15,871,672 by the end of 2024-25.

3.6. **PERFORMANCE**

- 3.6.1 TVFCS is measured against a set of targets agreed by the Joint Committee. A new format was agreed and introduced in April 2020. The new format continues to provide information on key mobilising performance metrics but also provides members with information relating to other activities undertaken by TVFCS which provide added value to the three FRS and their communities.
- 3.6.2 TVFCS has performed well against the existing measure for how quickly calls are answered during the year, with the target met in every month and exceeded on the majority of occasions.
- 3.6.3 Levels of performance against the time taken to mobilise resources declined compared with previous years. This coincided with the introduction of national restrictions to combat the COVID19 pandemic. These restrictions have caused societal and behavioural changes which have likely influenced the way TVFCS has been required to work which has impacted on the time taken to handle calls in some scenarios.
- 3.6.4 Call challenging for Automatic Fire Alarms has also been shown to have an impact on call handling times. Call challenging is an integral part of the response process for both OFRS and RBFRS and offers significant benefits by reducing the number of emergency vehicle movements. This preserves resources for more urgent incidents, improving the overall response standard, reducing costs and reducing the road risk posed by 'blue light' response. The application of effective call challenge to commercial and retail premises has been more challenging during the pandemic.
- 3.6.5 For the first time the new format also reports on the key contribution TVFCS staff make in the areas of Prevention and Protection. A significant focus is on the part TVFCS play in routing information from partner agencies, primarily relating to Safeguarding. In particular they manage notifications from Thames Valley Police when a credible threat of arson has been received against a person or premises and action needs to be urgently taken. It also includes supporting residents who have issues with defective smoke alarms, providing details to the Duty Officer who is then able to take the appropriate action.

3.7. **STAFFING**

- 3.7.1 Staff turnover rates have remained at a consistently low level over the last 12 months, with only two staff leaving TVFCS. Both of these individuals moved onto to other roles within the Fire & Rescue Service.

- 3.7.2 It has continued to be possible to fill all internal vacancies for Supervisory and Middle Management roles with internal candidates, demonstrating the progress that has been made in terms of staff development and succession planning.

3.8. YEAR END FINANCIAL POSITION

- 3.8.1 The budget for TVFCS is set at the December meeting of the Joint Committee each year. The budget for TVFCS for 2020/21 was £2,355,110. At year end, the actual expenditure was £2,341,485 creating an in year efficiency of £13,624 and a small variance of -0.58%. The principal cause being lower than anticipated costs relating to the technology used within TVFCS.

3.9. NOTABLE ACTIVITY

- 3.9.1 Throughout the year, activity in TVFCS has largely been driven by the need to respond to the COVID19 pandemic, ensuring that the service was resilient and able to continue to operate to a high standard throughout whilst placing a focus on the health and wellbeing of our staff.
- 3.9.2 An early decision was made to restrict access to the Control room and surrounding area to essential staff only to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus to TVFCS staff. This was replicated in the secondary control room at Kidlington.
- 3.9.3 Enhanced arrangements for cleaning and personal hygiene have been introduced to mitigate the risk of virus spread between TVFCS staff members. Glass screens have been provided between workstations that were not separated by at least two metres to create the safest working environment possible and partitions provided in communal areas to facilitate social distancing.
- 3.9.4 A local agreement between RBFRS and the Fire Brigades Union was reached, allowing for the variance of some normal working arrangements, enabling better support for the health and wellbeing of staff whilst providing increased resilience to the staffing of the Control room.
- 3.9.5 Working in partnership with the RBFRS Human Resources team, TVFCS were able to offer 'end of the day' vaccinations to Control staff as part of the national drive to prevent vaccine wastage. All TVFCS that wished to be vaccinated had received a first dose by the end of February 2021.
- 3.9.6 During Q4, a lateral flow testing site was opened in Newsham Court to provide rapid testing for TVFCS staff. This site is facilitated by volunteers from TVFCS and RBFRS corporate staff and has provided over 400 tests since commencing operation.
- 3.9.7 TVFCS has continued to evidence its operational effectiveness during the year, managing spate flooding conditions and providing lifesaving advice to callers trapped by fire on a number of occasions. A member of TVFCS staff has been recognised as 'Emergency Responder of the year' in the RBFRS annual awards for the lifesaving advice she provided to two youths trapped in a domestic fire in Reading during the Summer of 2020.
- 3.9.8 TVFCS have implemented technological change to support the introduction of new arrangements for the exchange of information between Fire Service Control rooms nationally. These arrangements are now embedded and were used successfully nationally during a recent high rise fire in London. TVFCS have also been involved in the production of new Control Room National Operational Guidance. Control guidance is a key work stream within the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Central Programme Office (CPO)

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Both of these key areas contribute to meeting the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower phase one inquiry.

3.10. LOOKING FORWARD

- 3.10.1 The Joint Committee will be considering the options available relating to the extension of the current contract for the Capita Secure Solutions and Services (SSS) 'Vision' command and control system. This is a key decision for the next 4-5 years, ensuring the service has the support it needs and continues to utilise the most up to date technology.
- 3.10.2 Staffordshire & West Midlands Fire Control (S&WMFS) provide the 'fall back' solution as part of TVFCS business continuity planning. They are undertaking an upgrade to their Command & Control system which will provide an enhanced and improved service, enabling S&WMFS systems to mirror TVFCS systems.
- 3.10.3 TVFCS will continue to adopt National Operational Guidance as it published by the Central Programme Office, ensuring control staff are able to work to 'industry best practice'.
- 3.10.4 Technical work required to implement the new Emergency Services Network is scheduled to start during the year, which will impact on Control room operations.
- 3.10.5 TVFCS will continue to adapt to the changing demands of the national response to COVID19, making the changes required to support the health and wellbeing of our staff whilst continuing to provide a first class service.

4. COMPLIANCE WITH THE TVFCS PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

- 4.1 This report complies with Thames Valley Fire Control Service Partnership Agreement.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 N/A.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Risks relating to future activity are captured in the TVFCS risk register and reviewed regularly by the SROs.

9. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

- 9.1 Not applicable.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None.

12. APPENDICES

12.1 None.

13. CONTACT DETAILS

13.1 Group Manager Simon Harris – TVFCS
0118 938 4522 | 0774 863 1527

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THAMES VALLEY FIRE CONTROL SERVICE



SUBJECT	TVFCS MOBILISING REQUIREMENTS
PRESENTED TO:	JOINT COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	12 JULY 2021
LEAD OFFICER	AREA MANAGER JIM POWELL
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	DECISION

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) utilises the 'Vision 4' mobilising system which is provided by Capita Secure Solutions and Services (SSS) Ltd. Thames Valley partners entered into a contractual agreement for this provision which formally commenced when TVFCS 'went live' in April 2015.
- 1.2 Pursuant to the contract specification, the initial service period was set for seven years, expiring in April 2022, with options to extend service support provision for up to eight years (a maximum total of 15 years).
- 1.3 The Capita contract is aligned to the TVFCS partnership agreement which expires on the 15th anniversary of the commencement date and states that a review into mobilising requirements should be conducted at around the fifth anniversary of the commencement date.
- 1.4 This paper provides the rationale and accompanying information to support decision making in respect of extending Capita SSS service contract from April 2022, to ensure TVFCS can continue to provide a first class call handling and emergency mobilisation service to our communities across the Thames Valley.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Joint Committee:

- 2.1 **AGREE** to recommend to the participating Fire Authorities a contract extension for the Mobilising System of one year; and

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- 2.2** **NOTE** the projected expenditure from the Renewals Account commensurate with requirements outlined in the Capita 'system report' summarised at point 3.22.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 The duration of the TVFCS partnership agreement (the 'agreement') covers a 15 year period from the commencement date of April 2015, expiring in April 2030. The project team delivered the current Mobilising System contract (the contract) to mirror this arrangement, building in a review at seven years, creating the option for a contract break or contract extension (in single or multiple periods of twelve months, not exceeding eight years).
- 3.2 The contract review point aligns to the requirement of the agreement that "as soon as reasonably practicable following the fifth anniversary of the commencement date....Fire Authorities shall discuss whether the contract should be extended together with any upgrade, modification or refresh to the system." Largely due to the services' responses to Covid-19 and timelines specified within the contract, presentation of these recommendations has not been practicable prior to this meeting.
- 3.3 The control mobilising system is essential to the effective mobilisation of all FRS resources across the Thames Valley, ensuring that the quickest and most appropriate assets can be sent to incidents. It also supports the end to end application of safe systems of work for our staff.
- 3.4 The 'Vision 4' mobilising system procurement consisted of the purchase and supply of Capita SSS specified hardware, the software licence 'in perpetuity' and a maintenance and support service contract.
- 3.5 The service contract fulfils two key services; firstly a technical support element that ensures any system issues, malfunctions or errors are recovered and restored within pre-defined service level agreements. Secondly, it aligns TVFCS to the Vision upgrade pathway, set out by Capita SSS, that ensures TVFCS can utilise the latest technological developments in delivering its service.
- 3.6 In relation to any periods of extension, the service contract requires Capita SSS to provide a 'system report' (the report). The report sets out expected performance levels and recommends hardware upgrade and refresh options that would be necessary for TVFCS to maintain an appropriate, robust and resilient level of technological capability that will ensure the service can continue to take the software upgrades aligned to the Vision pathway. Equally, any hardware upgrades would also minimise risk in relation to issues affecting system stability and reduce the likelihood of experiencing critical system failures.
- 3.7 The report was received, reviewed and challenged by the Joint Coordinating Group (JCG), consisting of a Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) from each service, technical subject matter experts from each service and the TVFCS management team and a final version was agreed in March 2021.

- 3.8 In arriving at the recommendation set out in 2.1, JCG, in consultation with the aforementioned groups, considered a number of factors.
- 3.9 As part of robust business continuity planning, any critical technological system requires an appropriate level of contractually defined technical support to ensure it can maintain service delivery. This level of support could not be provided purely through an 'in house' capability. Having no support mechanisms in place would incur a significant risk of service interruption and therefore not extending the contract, essentially doing nothing, was deemed to be unviable.
- 3.10 TVFCS could, in principle, go to market and tender for a full system replacement. Our own experience, supported by sector wide learning, indicates that a full replacement, tender and implementation project would need to be appropriately resourced and take approximately 2 years. Any change of provider would require significant testing and implementation work. Furthermore, the current 'Vision' system took approximately 18 months to become fully stable after go live. It is possible a tender process may result in the same provider and this could positively, albeit minimally, affect implementation timescales.
- 3.11 The external environment is also a major factor to be considered in relation to the implementation of the Emergency Services Network (ESN, the replacement for the current Airwave communications system). The ESN project timelines have been extended on several occasions and this creates a level of uncertainty for services and in particular control rooms. Vision 4 will fully support ESN going forward and preparation work through software upgrades has already been undertaken. Current planning assumptions indicate that ESN will become fully operational in 2026. Commencing a replacement project at this time would significantly impact available capacity to implement ESN in the coming years, require duplication of work already completed and create an additional level of risk as new systems were implemented.
- 3.12 Ultimately, the Joint Committee will need to commission a full system replacement project as service contract extension options expire, however at this time such a project could not be completed ahead of the initial service contract end date of April 2022. Therefore, taking into account the points above, undertaking a replacement project at this time was also deemed to be unviable.
- 3.13 Therefore, in order to maintain the necessary technical support arrangements, TVFCS will need to extend the Capita SSS service contract.
- 3.14 In evaluating the optimum extension period it was necessary to consider recent developments in relation to announcements made by Capita in March 2021. Members were informed that Capita had announced a restructuring programme that would result in the sale of Capita SSS. This has been captured as a high risk in the TVFCS risk register.
- 3.15 Chief Fire Officer Rob MacDougall is leading a piece of work through the NFCC Strategic Commercial Board to work with Government, FRS and Capita to mitigate this risk and seek assurances on continued service provision, supporting the 60% of UK FRS that use Capita mobilising systems.

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Capita have indicated that they expect to sell the business within the 2021/22 financial year.

- 3.16 Therefore, to support mitigation of this risk, officers have recommended a one year extension to the contract from April 2022 to April 2023. This will enable the service to monitor and react to the outcome of the sale and consider how to proceed beyond the extended contract finish date. Officers will bring forward recommendations to the July 2022 Joint Committee setting out whether to further extend the contract in line with the agreement or seek to commence a full replacement.
- 3.17 To ensure TVFCS equipment is reliable, resilient and able to manage increasing demand and maintain a high standard of service delivery and to enable Capita SSS to continue to provide support through any recommended extension period, the report recommends and specifies a refresh and upgrade of all Vision 4 associated hardware.
- 3.18 The report provides estimated costs for the hardware refresh within a 'rough order of magnitude' and are set out at table 1.

Item	Description	Price (Rough Order of Magnitude)
VISION		
1.	Implementation effort, services, project management to support the delivery of VISION Technical refresh and all associated project services.	£223,098
2.	Technical Refresh Hardware and third party software	£175,231

Table 1

- 3.19 These costs would be recalculated at the point Fire Authorities decided to undertake the hardware refresh and, whilst the variance is not expected to be significant, additional budget will be required act as a contingency fund to account for increases in costs relating to current market conditions.
- 3.20 Furthermore, in order to deliver the Hardware refresh, Capita will appoint a project manager for the duration of the upgrade and there is an expectation, outlined in the report, that TVFCS will have a similar role in place. Current business as usual staffing arrangements do not support provision of this resource and Joint Committee will need to consider appointing a fixed term project manager to be able to effectively deliver the hardware refresh.
- 3.21 The Original hardware and licence costs were funded through capital expenditure as part of project implementation. The agreement makes provision for the Renewals Account for capital expenditure and replacement costs. Partners contribute to the account on an annual basis and this will form part of the Annual Capex Programme considered by the Joint Committee as part of the TVFCS budget setting process in December this year; it is currently set at £50,000 from each Authority. The Joint Committees prudent foresight and astute investment planning has enabled the service to develop a strategic fund that now stands at circa £1.8 million. As per the agreement the account balance is held by Oxfordshire County Council.

- 3.22 To comply with the TVFCS Partnership agreement, RBFA will provide an Annual Capital Expenditure (Capex) Programme for 2022/23 and a Capital Expenditure Forecast (that will cover the life of the agreement), along with the TVFCS Annual Budget, at the Joint Committee meeting in December 2021. The Capex programme will provide full detail on expected expenditure in 2022/23 in relation to the hardware refresh costs. This will enable the committee to access this fund in 2022/23 should members decide to further extend the contract, for a period that would necessitate upgrading the system, at the July meeting next year.
- 3.23 At this point, members are asked to note that, should a longer term extension be required, projected expenditure from the Renewals Account, taking consideration of points 3.18 – 3.20, will be in the region of £500,000. This will be brought forward for agreement as part of the Annual Capex Programme with the 2022/23 budget papers at the December meeting.
- 3.24 The contract has an ongoing revenue element and an indicative figure for contract extension is set out in table 2.

Item	Description	Price
3.	Annual support fee to be contracted under current terms with an indexation of 2% per annum	£71,109

Table 2

- 3.25 The service contract is funded by an annual revenue payment that forms part of the base budget each year. This budget line is agreed annually at the December meeting and reported through to members in the quarterly performance and budget monitoring report.
- 3.26 In summary, opting to extend the contract for one year mitigates the risk of negative impacts from the Captia SSS sale by enabling the service to be agile in terminating the contract should it choose to do so. It also supports provision of a well formed Annual Capex Programme for 2022/23 and a long term forecast which will enable the appropriate spending should the Committee consider a further, longer term extension suitable based on contracts being novated in full to the new provider. A decision on any further extension will be brought to members in July 2022. This paper has highlighted a broad funding envelope of £500k which provides members with early sight of predicted spend against the Renewals Account.

4. COMPLIANCE WITH THE TVFCS PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

- 4.1 This paper complies with the partnership agreement.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The financial implications are described within the main body of the report and summarised at 3.22.

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6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The legal implications of terminating or extending the contract are set out in the contract and procurement teams from each service will be engaged to ensure services comply with the relevant legislation.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no equality and diversity implications identified at this time.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The TVFCS risk register has captured the following risk in relation to the sale of Capita SSS:
If Capita SSS is sold and the purchaser makes unfavourable decisions on software development and provision of support, which is likely given commercial uncertainties around the sale, then we can expect TVFCS to experience substantial impacts on their ability to deliver an efficient, effective and resilient service which is significant in respect of delivering our statutory fire and rescue functions.
- 8.2 The recommendation 2.1 of this report seek to address this risk.

9. CONTRIBUTION TO SERVICE AIMS

- 9.1 The contents of this report support the following primary objectives as set out in the TVFCS partnership agreement:
1. To satisfy the core functions of the Fire Authorities as defined in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
 2. To satisfy the statutory duty of all the Fire Authorities as category one responders as defined in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004
 3. To improve the resilience of the control room function
 4. To improve performance
 5. To generate efficiencies

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

- 10.1 TVFCS Joint Coordination Group

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 None.

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 None.

13. CONTACT DETAILS

- 13.1 Area Manager Jim Powell RBFRS powellj@rbfrs.co.uk

THAMES VALLEY FIRE CONTROL SERVICE



SUBJECT	TVFCS COST APPORTIONMENT REVIEW
PRESENTED TO:	TVFCS JOINT COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	12 JULY 2021
LEAD OFFICER	AREA MANAGER JIM POWELL
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	TO NOTE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides the Joint Committee with the revised calculations to the cost apportionment percentages following the planned three yearly review as defined in the TVFCS Partnership Agreement.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Joint Committee:

- 2.1 **NOTE** the revised cost apportionment percentages as set out in section 3.9.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 The TVFCS Partnership Agreement sets out a Cost Apportionment Model (CAM) which is used to determine the percentage of the TVFCS Revenue budget paid annually by each FRS.
- 3.2 The TVFCS Partnership Agreement states in Schedule 8 Paragraph 2.1 that the CAM be reviewed;
- As soon as practicable after each third anniversary of 31 March 2014 (with the first review occurring at 31 March 2017); and
 - At any time when reasonably requested by two or more of the Fire

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Authorities.

Schedule 8 Paragraph 2.2 states that, upon a review pursuant to paragraph 2.1, the Cost Apportionment Model shall be revised to reflect the average figures for Population, Tax Base and Incidents attended over the preceding three completed financial years.

- 3.3 It was previously agreed by the Joint Committee that, due to the delay in the original 'Go Live' date of TVFCS, the first review of the Cost Apportionment Model be delayed until after the 3rd Anniversary of the TVFCS 'Go Live', with the initial review occurring at March 2018. Subsequent reviews take place on the third anniversary of that date.
- 3.4 TVFCS went 'Live' on 21st April 2015. The levels of cost apportionment were first reviewed in 2018. A revised cost apportionment breakdown was agreed by the TVFCS Joint Committee in September 2018 and applied to the 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 revenue budgets. The apportionment of cost during this period and data used to calculate the 2018 breakdown are shown below.

Steady State Cost Apportionment Model Data for 2015/16-2017/18 (Mean average for each element across period)								
	RBFA		OCC		BMKFA		Total	
		%		%		%		%
Population	917,000	38.2	679,667	29.2	797,333	32.6	2,394,000	100.0
Tax Base	329,821	38.3	238,784	27.8	291,738	33.9	£860,343	100.0
Incidents Attended	7993	36.8	6849	31.5	6893	31.7	21,735	100.0
Average % (population tax base & incidents attended)		37.8%		29.5%		32.7%		100.0%

It should be noted that the ONS has revised its population estimate since this data was originally published, meaning that the current population estimate for Royal Berkshire is now lower than shown in 2018.

- 3.5 For the purpose of reviewing the current levels of cost apportionment, tax base and incident data for the full financial years 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/2021 has been used.
- 3.6 Population data for the relevant years is taken from information published by the Office for National Statistics (Estimates of the population for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland).
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwales/scotlandandnorthernireland>

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- 3.7 Information relating to the numbers of incidents attended has been provided by the Thames Valley Data Group, which is made up of staff from each FRS who are responsible for the production of performance data. The data used is derived from the national Incident Reporting System (IRS) which is used by the Home Office to produce incident statistics.
- 3.8 Information on Tax base is provided to each FRS by its precepting Local Authorities.
- 3.9 The table below shows the relevant figures and the final percentage cost apportionment for each of the Thames Valley FRS.

Steady State Cost Apportionment Model Data for 2018/19-2020/21 (Mean average for each element across period)								
	RBFA		OCC		BMKFA		Total	
		%		%		%		%
Population	914,675	37.8	692,024	28.6	813,120	33.6	2,419,818	100.0
Tax Base	£347,752	38.4	£251,460	27.8	£305,541	33.8	£860,343	100.0
Incidents Attended	7309	34.7	5932	28.2	7824	37.1	21,735	100.0
Average % (population tax base & incidents attended)		37.0%		28.2%		34.8%		100.0%

A breakdown of figures on an annual basis is included as **Appendix A**

4. COMPLIANCE WITH THE TVFCS PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

- 4.1 This report complies with Schedule 8 of the Thames Valley Fire Control Service Steady State Legal Agreement (Cost Apportionment Model) Schedule 8 Paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The revised cost apportionment percentages contained within this report will have implications to the individual FRS with regard to the funding of the TVFCS Revenue budget for three financial years. They will be applied to the revenue budgets for 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None.

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8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None.

9. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

9.1 TVFCS Joint Coordination Group
Thames Valley Data Group

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None.

11. APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix A – Cost Apportionment breakdown by year.

12. CONTACT DETAILS

12.1 GM Simon Harris – Head of TVFCS
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12.2 Ryan Maslen – Deputy Head of Finance – RBFRS
07831 222263

Cost Apportionment Review

Annual Breakdown

Figures have been shown to 1 decimal place only, with rounding applied.

Steady State Cost Apportionment Model Data for 2018/19								
	RBFA		OCC		BMKFA		Total	
		%		%		%		%
Population	911,403	37.9	687,524	28.6	808,668	33.6	2,407,593	100.0
Tax Base	343,049	38.5	246,841	27.7	300,613	33.8	890,503	100.0
Incidents Attended	7,918	36.0	6,121	27.8	7,982	36.2	22,021	100.0
Average % (population tax base & incidents attended)		37.5%		28.0%		34.5%		100.0%

Steady State Cost Apportionment Model Data for 2019/20								
	RBFA		OCC		BMKFA		Total	
		%		%		%		%
Population	914,859	37.8	691,667	28.6	813,430	33.6	2,419,956	100.0
Tax Base	347,798	38.5	251,264	27.8	305,330	33.8	904,392	100.0
Incidents Attended	7,355	33.7	6,199	28.4	8,273	37.9	21,827	100.0
Average % (population tax base & incidents attended)		36.7%		28.2%		35.1%		100.0%

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Appendix A

Steady State Cost Apportionment Model Data for 2020/21								
	RBFA		OCC		BMKFA		Total	
		%		%		%		%
Population	917,762	37.7	696,88	28.7	817,263	33.6	2,431,905	100.0
Tax Base	352,409	38.3	256,276	27.9	310,680	33.8	919,365	100.0
Incidents Attended	6,654	34.4	5,476	28.3	7,218	37.3	19,348	100.0
Average % (population tax base & incidents attended)		36.8%		28.3%		34.9%		100.0%

THAMES VALLEY FIRE CONTROL SERVICE



SUBJECT	TVFCS QUARTER 3 AND QUARTER 4 2020/21 PERFORMANCE REPORTS
PRESENTED TO:	TVFCS JOINT COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	12 JULY 2021
LEAD OFFICER	AREA MANAGER JIM POWELL
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	FOR NOTE

1. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To provide the Joint Committee with an update report on the performance of the Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS)
- 1.2 The Control Manager's performance reports for 2020/21 Quarter 3 (Appendix A) and 2020/21 Quarter 4 (Appendix B) provide a detailed narrative on TVFCS' performance together with the agreed set of performance information to enable comparisons.
- 1.3 Due to the previously agreed change in the frequency of TVFCS Joint Committee Meetings, a separate performance report for each of the two preceding quarters has been provided for this meeting of the TVFCS Joint Committee.

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Joint Committee:

- 2.1 **NOTE** the report.

3. **REPORT**

- 3.1 The Quarter 3 2020/21 Performance Report is attached as **Appendix A**.

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- 3.2 The Quarter 4 2020/21 Performance Report is attached as **Appendix B**.
- 3.3 The reports reflect the revised performance measures previously agreed by the TVFCS Joint Committee.
- 4. **COMPLIANCE WITH THE TVFCS PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**
 - 4.1 This report complies with the Steady State Legal Agreement which defines the responsibilities for measuring and reporting on performance.
- 5. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**
 - 5.1 There are no implications within this report.
- 6. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**
 - 6.1 There are no implications within this report.
- 7. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**
 - 7.1 There are no implications within this report.
- 8. **RISK IMPLICATIONS**
 - 8.1 There are no implications within this report
- 10. **PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION**
 - 10.1 None for this report.
- 11. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**
 - 11.1 Programme Sponsoring Group Benefits Paper – 11 April 2013.
- 12. **APPENDICES**
 - 12.1 Appendix A – TVFCS Control Manager's performance report for 2020/21 Quarter 3.
 - 12.2 Appendix B – TVFCS Control Manager's performance report for 2020/21 Quarter 4.
- 13. **CONTACT DETAILS**
 - 13.1 Simon Harris GM Thames Valley Fire Control Service
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Thames Valley Fire Control Service



Joint Committee Performance Report (Quarter 3 2020/21)



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Introduction

The Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) performance report presents information on the performance of the joint control room.

This is to provide structure and governance that enables TVFCS to measure, monitor and manage outputs and outcomes in a timely manner, allowing us to respond and make informed decisions to ensure that our statutory and partnership obligations are successfully delivered.

The aim of this report is to share how TVFCS has performed over the previous three months, offer explanation, analysis and mitigation for target outcomes, and to suggest positive means of carrying effective performance into the future.

Key to Icons and Colours

	Target exceeded by more than 10%
	Target met or exceeded by up to 10%
	Target missed by up to 10%
	Target missed by more than 10%
	NA or data accuracy issues affect confidence in reporting

Operational Context

During the third quarter of 2020/21, TVFCS activity has continued to be driven by the need to respond to the COVID19 pandemic. As has been the case throughout the pandemic, the focus has continued to be on safeguarding the health and wellbeing of TVFCS staff, whilst maintaining a first class service for our Fire & Rescue Services and our communities.

Staffing issues caused by COVID 19 have reduced for TVFCS during Q3 compared with Q2. The number of days of sickness absence during November and December reduced significantly in comparison with what would normally be expected at this time of year and coupled with a reduction in the incidences of staff being required to isolate as a result of COVID, eased the previous pressure on crewing levels significantly.

TVFCS continues to see an overall reduction in demand compared with the equivalent period in 2019/20. This reduction is believed to be linked to the societal and behavioural changes resulting from the response to COVID19, the consequent impacts on the number of journeys made and lower levels of economic activity.

On December 23rd and 24th 2020, high rainfall was experienced in Northern Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. This combined with high water levels on the River Great Ouse, caused an extended period of high demand to be experienced in TVFCS. Between 09:00 on 23rd December and 15:00 on 24th December, TVFCS were inundated with emergency calls requesting the assistance of the Fire & Rescue Service in relation to property flooding and vehicles stuck in floodwater. TVFCS worked closely with FRS Duty Officers, Emergency Planning Officers and other members of the Local Resilience Forum to coordinate the response to these events.

Work was undertaken within TVFCS during November and December to implement changes to the Airwave radio system to take advantage of national initiatives to improve communication between Control rooms. This included the adoption of a new 'National Broadcast' facility, which allow a Fire Control room to communicate simultaneously with every other Fire Control room in the country via a single transmission.

Resourcing

No staff turnover has been experienced within TVFCS in either Q2 or Q3 2021 and new starters that joined TVFCS in September have completed their initial training period and have begun the second phase of their development attached to their respective watches.

Sickness levels in the third quarter of 2020/21 decreased markedly compared with both the previous quarter and the equivalent quarter in 2019/20. These low levels of sickness, coupled with the successful recruitment activity undertaken previously has allowed for a period of stability in terms of staffing.

Whilst no sickness absence has occurred during the quarter as a result of COVID19 infection, throughout the quarter a number of staff have been required to self-isolate as a result of COVID symptoms. In some of these cases staff would normally have attended work whilst managing mild symptoms but were unable to do so until a COVID test result had been received. The improved availability of PCR tests nationally and the test results being returned more quickly has reduced the impact on TVFCS crewing levels in comparison to Q2.

TVFCS Joint Committee Performance Report

Measure	October 2020	November 2020	December 2020
Short-term Sickness Episodes	8	2	3
Long-term Sickness Episodes*	0	0	0
Total Days lost to Sickness	23	2	5
Average days lost per FTE	0.52	0.05	0.12
Days lost to COVID Isolation (Non Sickness)	0	3	3

*A sickness episode is considered to be 'long-term' once the individual has been absent for more than 28 days.

Staff Development

The progress of staff through their development programmes continues following transition to the new Development and Assessment pathways for Control staff. Feedback from staff on the content of the new pathways has been positive and levels of engagement have been high and a number of staff undertaking the Crew Manager Development Pathway will complete the process during Quarter 4.

Development status

Role	Current staff	Number who have completed role Development pathway	Number in Development	% of Current Staff in Development
Group Manager	1	1	0	0%
Control Manager	1	1	0	0%
Control Training Manager	1	0	1	100%
Watch Manager	4	4	0	0%
Crew Manager	12	4	8	67%
Fire Fighter	23	16	7	30%
TOTAL	42	26	13	32%

The information provided in the table shown above relates to those who have successfully completed the development pathway associated with their substantive role, which qualifies the individual to receive the 'competent' rate of pay for that role. All TVFCS staff are assessed for their ability to perform safely in a role before being considered for promotion to that role.

Prevention and Protection

TVFCS staff have contributed to prevention activity during the quarter through the identification and referral of 21 residents of the Thames Valley with defective smoke alarms in their homes and through the handling of 37 safeguarding notifications. Most issues with defective domestic smoke alarms are as a result of the device's battery becoming flat, causing it to sound. This is often a cause of real concern for our most vulnerable residents, unable to access the device, or unsure what the noise they are hearing is indicating. In these cases, TVFCS will pass the information onto the relevant FRS to facilitate an urgent 'safe and well' visit for the occupant to replace the faulty alarm and provide other safety advice. Safeguarding issues can either be identified by TVFCS when dealing with callers, or following attendance at an address where crews will notify TVFCS that a safeguarding issue has been identified. All TVFCS staff receive regular mandatory training relating to the safeguarding of both adults and children to assist them with this aspect of their work.

TVFCS also deal with notifications from partner agencies, primarily Thames Valley Police, when a credible threat of arson has been received against a person or premises and action needs to be urgently taken. The notifications are then passed to the relevant FRS to be dealt with in line with their respective procedures. TVFCS have not dealt with any urgent notifications of this type during Q3 2020/21, however TVFCS have been notified of threats against 47 other addresses during the period which have been passed via other routes. This represents an increase of 147% compared with Q2 and is believed to be linked to the national restrictions currently in place. Once suitable inspections have been carried out at a premises where an arson threat has been received and appropriate measures applied to the premises, TVFCS will normally be asked to take additional actions should a call to the address be received. This may involve increasing the number of appliances sent to the address, or making urgent contact with the Police and other agencies.

TVFCS Joint Committee Performance Report

Response

Measure		October 2020	November 2020	December 2020	Reporting period average	Q3 2019/20 average	Rolling 12 month average
1	Total Emergency calls answered	2762	2458	2853	2691	2826	2819
2	Number of Mobilisations	1675	1580	1628	1628	1809	1712

*Definitions are available in appendix A

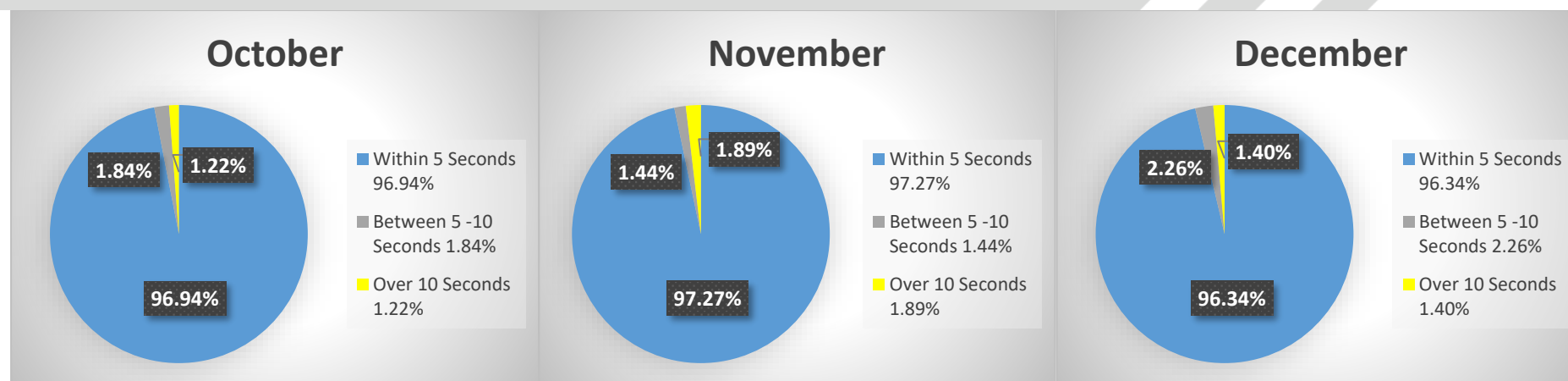
The number of incoming emergency calls handled by TVFCS reduced by 4.77% in comparison with the equivalent quarter in 2019/20. This is consistent with the trend initially observed in Q1 2020/21 which coincided with the restrictions on public movement and commercial activity introduced as part of the national response to COVID19 on March 23rd 2020.

The same pattern is also present in the number of mobilisations which took place during the period with an overall reduction of 10.00% compared with 2019/20.

Measure*		2020/21 Target	October 2020	November 2020	December 2020	Reporting period average	Q3 2019/20	Rolling 12 month average
3	Emergency calls answered within 5 seconds	92%	96.94%	97.27%	96.34%	96.85%	97.23%	96.33%
4	Emergency calls answered within 10 seconds	97%	98.78%	98.71%	98.60%	98.70%	98.97%	98.29%

*Definitions are available in appendix A

TVFCS Joint Committee Performance Report



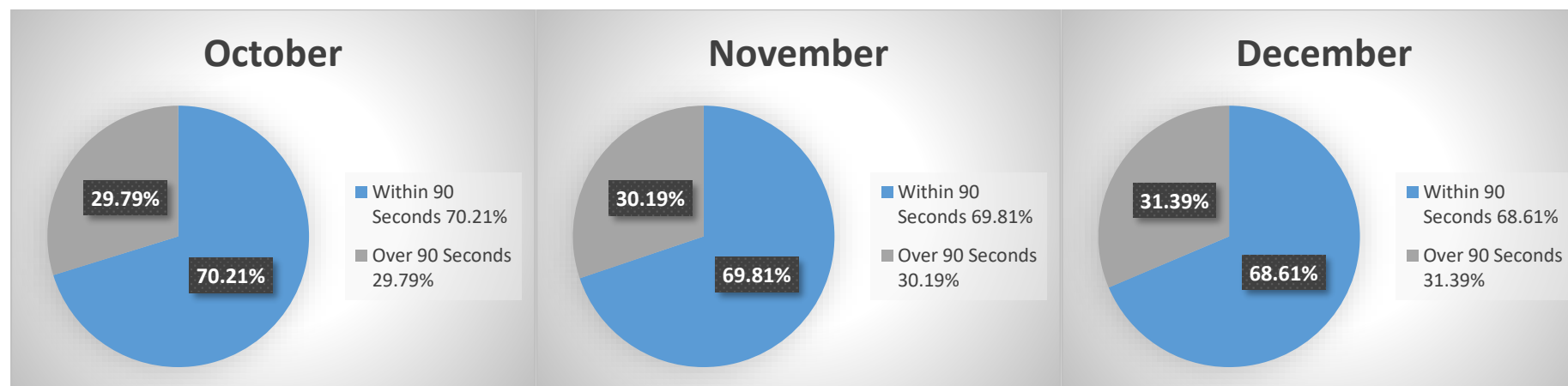
This measure examines call waiting times by looking at the performance of TVFCS staff when answering emergency calls. It sets two targets for how quickly control operators should pick up an emergency call when it comes into the control room. We measure whether a call is picked up within 5 or 10 seconds and the expected performance is that this will be done on 92% or 97% of occasions respectively. Performance against these targets is very good and the targets are routinely exceeded. In reality this means that the majority (97% or more) of all emergency calls that come into TVFCS will be picked in 10 seconds or less. The actual figures for quarter 3 show that, on average, control operators picked up 96.85% of all emergency call within 5 seconds and 98.70% of all emergency calls within 10 seconds.

The small number of occasions where these times are exceeded are associated with periods of higher demand where a number of calls are received simultaneously, this can be as a result of a large number of calls being received in a relatively short period of time, either as a result of single incident which is visible to a large number of people (for example, a fire involving grass on the side of a major road) or as a result of environmental conditions affecting large numbers of people simultaneously, such as exceptionally heavy rainfall causing flooding.

Whilst it can be very difficult to predict the former, TVFCS will normally receive weather warnings ahead of severe weather allowing plans to be made to match resourcing to anticipate demand. The weather conditions experienced on 23rd and 24th December 2020 caused an extended period of high demand, with high numbers of calls being received for a period of over 24 hours. Additional staff were recalled to manage the surge in demand and members of the management team were deployed into the Control room to assist with the management of the response. This flexibility in terms of resourcing meant that performance against this measure was not impacted adversely.

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Measure*		2020/21 Target	October 2020	November 2020	December 2020	Reporting Period Average	Q3 2019/20	Rolling 12 Month Average
5	% occasions where time to alert station is within 90 seconds of the emergency call being answered.	80%	70.21%	69.81%	68.61%	69.54%	75.17%	72.03%



It had been expected that, following the normal dip in performance against this measure that is regularly experienced in the summer months, performance would begin to improve against this measure during Q3. During the current year, this has not been the case and performance has declined compared with both the previous quarter and the equivalent period in 2019/20. There appear to be a number of casual factors which, in combination, have contributed to this slight deterioration of performance. The issues relating to call challenging automatic fire alarm activations in commercial premises have continued to cause some difficulties for TVFCS staff. In addition, new staff have joined their watches and begun to take 'live' 999 calls. The high number of calls to flooding in December 2020 also appear to have had an impact. Provisional data from January 2021 shows an increase in performance in this area, which would be consistent with the new staff improving their skill sets.

TVFCS Joint Committee Performance Report

During the quarter, TVFCS successfully challenged 1084 emergency calls. In addition to calls to alarms where FRS attendance is not required in Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire, this figure also includes a large number of calls to other incident types where, through extended questioning of the caller, it is identified that an agency other than the Fire & Rescue Service is more appropriate to provide the assistance that the caller requires. Whilst this call challenge process can lead to extended call handling times, it is a vital aspect of the overall response strategy of the FRS as it preserves the availability of resources to attend incidents where life and property are threatened and simultaneously reduces the risk posed to the public and firefighters when responding to incidents under 'blue light' conditions. The increase in the number of calls challenged in Q3 compared with Q1 and Q2 was predominantly a result of the number of calls received reporting flooding during December where it was determined that the FRS was not the most appropriate agency to assist, with the calls being passed on to other agencies, or advice being given to callers by TVFCS staff.

Measure		2020/21 Target	October 2020	November 2020	December 2020	Reporting period average	Q3 2019/20	Rolling 12 month average
6	Average time to alert station in seconds – Primary Fires	N/A	84	54	67	69	60	68
7	Average Time to alert station in seconds – Secondary Fires	N/A	80	96	82	88	71	78
9	Average time to alert station in seconds – Road Traffic Collisions	N/A	91	83	90	88	85	85

*Definitions are available in appendix A

The average time taken to alert a station following a call being answered, where a mobilisation required, is a useful measure to determine how effectively Control staff are able to handle calls. The incident types included in this reporting measure are those which are most often dealt with by the Control room with the potential to involve a threat to life and/or damage to property. On average, TVFCS staff take 90 seconds or less to handle these types of calls, further evidencing their role in supporting the performance of the three FRS' against their Integrated Risk Management Plans and in protecting communities across the Thames Valley.

TVFCS Joint Committee Performance Report

Primary fires are typically incidents which pose a higher risk to life and property, as they generally relate to fires occurring within buildings. Throughout the period, TVFCS have consistently mobilised to these incidents within 90 seconds. There has been a slight increase compared with the equivalent period in 2019/20, but performance remains strong, with performance in November being exceptionally good.

Secondary fires tend to be smaller, predominantly outdoor fires, which can often be more difficult to locate than fires involving buildings. It is therefore expected that Control staff will take slightly longer to handle these calls and this is reflected in the statistics for the period. The average time taken to handle these calls has increased compared with 2019/20, but still remains within target for the quarter.

Road traffic collisions typically take longer to locate than many other incident types, as callers are often not familiar with the area they travelling in, and are often only able to pinpoint their location as being between two notable points, for example roundabouts or other landmarks, which can make identifying a precise location challenging. A large number of calls to road traffic collisions are passed to TVFCS by the Police or Ambulance Service, which means that assistive technology for location identification such as BT Advanced Mobile Location cannot be used. Although the average call handling time for these incidents remains under 90 seconds on average, an increase can be seen compared with 2019/20. Investigations by the TVFCS management team indicate that this is being caused by the revision of protocols for the handling of calls reporting RTCs which come from partner agencies. This protocol change leads to slightly longer call handling times, but results in a better use of FRS resources in response to these incidents.

Resilience

During the Quarter, agreed minimum crewing levels were maintained on 100% of occasions. Due to the relatively low number of sickness absences during the period, and the successful recruitment activity carried out during Quarter 2, no support from members of the Control room's management team was required at night or over weekends during the quarter, allowing those staff to dedicate their time to other activities.

TVFCS plans include a quarterly full evacuation exercise, with staff relocating to the secondary control room facility at Kidlington. Due to the restrictions associated with COVID19, the physical evacuation exercises have been suspended and replaced with simulated evacuation exercises.

On December 16th 2020, a business resilience exercise took place simulating an unplanned evacuation to Kidlington, where TVFCS calls needed to be diverted to the Staffordshire & West Midlands Fire Control (S&WMFC). During the exercise, S&WMFC staff correctly identified and notified the appropriate Thames Valley Resources for each call passed to them, using the agreed resilient 'fall back' systems and notionally managed incidents in line with Thames Valley procedure. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID19 pandemic, TVFCS and S&WMFC have been able to maintain their programme of resilience testing, which is now well embedded.

Data and Intelligence

During Quarter 3 2020/21, all requests for change submitted by the FRS to TVFCS were processed within 5 working days of the request being received. These included requests to amend the Pre-determined attendance for specific locations, add or amend details of newly promoted FRS officers, changes to details relating to fire appliances and changes to FRS procedures carried out by TVFCS staff when dealing with particular types of events.

A number of requests for information to assist with investigations have been received from Thames Valley Police during the quarter. These requests are referred to the relevant FRS for approval before being released to ensure all relevant data protection legislation is complied with.

Financial Position

	<i>Total Annual Budget</i>	<i>Actual Expenditure To 31st December 2020</i>	<i>Forecast Outturn at Year End</i>	<i>Variance = Forecast - Annual Budget</i>	<i>Variance %</i>
Staff	1,764,060	1,318,418	1,755,665	-8,395	-0.48%
Corporate	308,250	231,188	308,250	0	0
Other	35,740	3,254	36,295	555	1.55%
Technology	247,060	146,196	216,635	-30,425	-12.31%
Total Budgeted Expenditure	2,355,110	1,699,056	2,316,845	-38,265	-1.62%

Appendix A

Performance Measure Definitions

Measure	Description
% of occasions where the time to answer emergency calls is within 5 seconds	This measure uses the time taken from when the Fire Control Room system receives an emergency incoming call alert to the moment they are answered by a TVFCS Operator.
% of occasions where the time to answer emergency calls is within 10 seconds	This measure uses the time taken from when the Fire Control Room system receives an emergency incoming call alert to the moment they are answered by a TVFCS Operator.
% of occasions where time to mobilise is within 90 seconds	This measure is calculated from when emergency calls are answered to when control room staff operate equipment at a station notifying crews that they are required to respond.
Average time to alert station in seconds – Primary Fires	The average number of seconds elapsed between an emergency call being answered and control staff operating equipment at a station notifying crews that they are required to mobilise when responding to primary fires. Primary fires are defined as ‘more serious fires that harm people or cause damage to property’
Average time to alert station in seconds – Secondary Fires	The average number of seconds elapsed between an emergency call being answered and control staff operating equipment at a station notifying crews that they are required to mobilise when responding to secondary fires. Secondary fires are defined as ‘generally small outdoor fires, not involving people or property’.
Average time to alert station in seconds – Road Traffic Collisions	The average number of seconds elapsed between an emergency call being answered and control staff operating equipment at a station notifying crews that they are required to mobilise when responding to road traffic collisions.

Appendix B Budget Summary

TVFCS Budget Monitoring to 31 st December 2020						
	<i>Total Annual Budget</i>	<i>Actual Expenditure To 31st December 2020</i>	<i>Forecast Outturn at Year End</i>	<i>Variance = Forecast - Annual Budget</i>	<i>Variance %</i>	<i>Commentary</i>
Staff						
Employment Costs	1,753,010	1,305,559	1,741,155	-11,855	-0.68%	Staff movement early in the year has created a small variance in employment costs.
Mileage and Subsistence	7,000	2,186	2,915	-4,085	-58.36	COVID19 has meant that the majority of physical meetings, both within the Thames Valley and nationally have either been cancelled or held virtually. This has

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						greatly reduced travelling and associated costs for members of the TVFCS management team.
Uniform Allowances	3,000	9,027	9,027	6,027	200.90%	This relates to an historic allowance paid to some staff for particular items of uniform not provided by the service. It has been agreed with the representative body to remove this allowance and provide the uniform items in a different way from December 2023. A payment was been made to all eligible staff to cover provision of this item in the interim period. The allowance will not be paid from January 2021

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Training	750	-172	750		0%	The negative expenditure shown relates to the refund of costs for external training cancelled as a result of COVID19. It is anticipated that the training course which utilise this budget will resume when social distancing measures are relaxed.
Recruitment	300	1,818	1,818	1,518	506.00%	The original budget set was based on the aptitude testing of potential new recruits being carried out by TVFCS and RBFRS staff on site. COVID19 restrictions has meant that this approach has not been possible and testing has had to be moved to online platforms with higher costs.

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Sub Total	1,764,060	1,318,418	1,755,665	-8,395	-0.48%	
Corporate						
Facilities	98,180	24,545	98,180		0%	
Finance	22,720	5,680	22,720		0%	
HR	73,070	18,268	73,070		0%	
ICT	91,530	22,883	91,530		0%	
Liability and Equipment Insurance	7,090	1,773	7,090		0%	
Management	15,660	3,915	15,660		0%	
Sub Total	308,250	231,188	308,250		0%	
Other						
Professional Services and General Equipment Purchase	5,500	3,254	6,055	555	8.73%	Costs for the equipment purchased as part of the COVID response have been recouped, however wear and tear of some items, necessitating replacement

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						means a small overspend against this budget is likely.
OFRS Costs (secondary control facility)	42,140	0	42,140		0%	
TVFCS Alarm Receiving Centre income	-11,900	0	-11,900		0%	
Sub Total	35,740	3,254	36,295	555	1.55%	
Technology						
Capita Mobs System (maint)	69,210	56,585	56,585	-12,625	-18.24%	Payments were received from Capita during Q2, representing credits due for failure to rectify a number of minor faults within the agreed contractual service levels. Due to some internal issues within Capita, TVFCS received credits due for both the 2018/19 financial year and the 2019/20 financial

						year. These credits can be used to obtain services and upgrades from Capita over and above those set out in the contract, with any remaining credits applied to the Capita Maintenance and Support costs to generate an in year efficiency.
DS3000 (for primary and secondary) ICCS	87,200	53,589	72,793	-14,407	-16.52%	Payments were received from Capita during Q2, representing credits due for failure to rectify a number of minor faults within the agreed contractual service levels. Due to some internal issues within Capita, TVFCS received credits due for both the 2018/19 financial year and the 2019/20 financial

						year. These credits can be used to obtain services and upgrades from Capita over and above those set out in the contract, with any remaining credits applied to the Capita Maintenance and Support costs to generate an in year efficiency.
Telephony and Network costs.	49,510	28,983	46,117	-3,393	-6.85%	Lower than anticipated call charges have created a small 'in year' saving in this area.
Software Maintenance	700	289	700	0	0%	
EISEC Services (Primary and Secondary Control)	9,000	6,750	9,000	0	0%	
Smart services to switch 999 lines to secondary control or elsewhere	17,340	0	17,340	0	0%	

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Airwave rental (SAN I ,B) (Primary,secondary) (7+8)	14,100	0	14,100	0	0%	
Sub Total	247,060	146,196	216,635	-30,425	-12.31%	
Total Budgeted Expenditure	2,355,110	1,699,056	2,316,845	-38,265	-1.62%	

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Thames Valley Fire Control Service



Joint Committee Performance Report (Quarter 4 2020/21)



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Introduction

The Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) performance report presents information on the performance of the joint control room.

This is to provide structure and governance that enables TVFCS to measure, monitor and manage outputs and outcomes in a timely manner, allowing us to respond and make informed decisions to ensure that our statutory and partnership obligations are successfully delivered.

The aim of this report is to share how TVFCS has performed over the previous three months, offer explanation, analysis and mitigation for target outcomes, and to suggest positive means of carrying effective performance into the future.

Key to Icons and Colours

	Target exceeded by more than 10%
	Target met or exceeded by up to 10%
	Target missed by up to 10%
	Target missed by more than 10%
	NA or data accuracy issues affect confidence in reporting

Operational Context

During the final quarter of 2020/21, TVFCS has continued to focus on maintaining our service during the COVID19 pandemic and ensuring the health and wellbeing of our staff. Working with partner agencies, during January we were able to offer vaccinations to TVFCS staff as part of the drive to avoid vaccine wastage and, as a result, all TVFCS staff who wished to be vaccinated received their first vaccination during the quarter.

Although staff absences increased compared with the very low levels seen during quarter 3, these were consistent with the normal levels of absence we expect at this time of year due to seasonal illnesses and are in fact, slightly lower than the equivalent quarter in 2019/20. A number of absences during the quarter can be associated with the impacts of the pandemic and the impact that COVID19 has had on individual's personal circumstances. Despite the increase in absence compared with Q3, no issues were experienced in maintaining TVFCS crewing levels, largely as a result of the continued excellent flexibility shown by our staff.

TVFCS has continued to see a slight reduction in demand compared with previous years, as noted in previous reports. It is still believed that this is linked to societal and behavioural changes associated with the pandemic response. Initial analysis of data indicates that demand is returning to normal seasonal levels as the country adjusts to the changes brought by the pandemic and moves through the stages of the Government's roadmap towards recovery.

The TVFCS Senior Responsible Owners (SROs) and the management team have continued to plan for the anticipated changes that will impact on TVFCS over coming months. Q4 has seen TVFCS involved in the consultation for and peer review of National Operational Guidance (N.O.G) for Control rooms. The first pieces of Control N.O.G are expected to be published during Q1 2021/22 and will require changes to TVFCS policies, procedures and training to ensure that we are fully aligned. This anticipated workload is captured within Service planning activity to ensure effective resourcing and prioritisation of tasks.

Resourcing

The TVFCS staff pool has remained stable through the final quarter of the year, with no staff turnover being experienced. A period of maternity leave commenced during the quarter, but as proactive recruitment had taken place ahead of the maternity commencing, this has not caused any issues in maintaining crewing levels.

Sickness levels in the quarter remain consistent with expected seasonal variation and are actually lower than the Q4 period 2019/20. There is an increase in levels of absence compared with Q3 2020/21, much of which can be attributed to circumstances associated with the pandemic response.

Measure	January 2021	February 2021	March 2021
Short-term Sickness Episodes	3	7	9
Long-term Sickness Episodes*	0	1	1
Total Days lost to Sickness	20	30	39
Average days lost per FTE	0.47	0.70	0.91

*A sickness episode is considered to be 'long-term' once the individual has been absent for more than 28 days.

Staff Development

The progress of staff through their development programmes continues following transition to the new Development and Assessment pathways for Control staff. Feedback on the content of the new pathways is positive, with staff feeling that they are better prepared to meet the requirements of their roles as a result. A number of our Crew Managers are expected to complete their development programmes during the course of this calendar year.

Development status

Role	Current staff	Number who have completed role Development pathway	Number in Development	% of Current Staff in Development
Group Manager	1	1	0	0%
Control Manager	1	1	0	0%
Control Training Manager	1	0	1	100%
Watch Manager	4	4	0	0%
Crew Manager	12	4	8	67%
Fire Fighter	23	16	7	30%
TOTAL	42	26	13	32%

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The information provided in the table shown above relates to those who have successfully completed the development pathway associated with their substantive role, which qualifies the individual to receive the 'competent' rate of pay for that role. All TVFCS staff are assessed for their ability to perform safely in a role before being considered for promotion to that role.

Prevention and Protection

TVFCS staff have contributed to prevention activity during the quarter through the identification and referral of 14 residents of the Thames Valley with defective smoke alarms in their homes and through the handling of 34 safeguarding notifications. Most issues with defective domestic smoke alarms are as a result of the device's battery becoming flat, causing it to sound. This is often a cause of real concern for our most vulnerable residents, unable to access the device, or unsure what the noise they are hearing is indicating. In these cases, TVFCS will pass the information onto the relevant Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) to facilitate an urgent 'safe and well' visit for the occupant to replace the faulty alarm and provide other safety advice. Safeguarding issues can either be identified by TVFCS when dealing with callers, or following attendance at an address where crews will notify TVFCS that a safeguarding issue has been identified. All TVFCS staff receive regular mandatory training relating to the safeguarding of both adults and children to assist them with this aspect of their work.

TVFCS also deal with notifications from partner agencies, primarily Thames Valley Police, when a credible threat of arson has been received against a person or premises and action needs to be urgently taken. The notifications are then passed to the relevant FRS to be dealt with in line with their respective procedures. TVFCS only received a single urgent notification during Q4, however TVFCS have been notified of threats against 27 other addresses during the period which have been passed via other routes. Once suitable inspections have been carried out at a premises where an arson threat has been received and appropriate measures applied to the premises, TVFCS will normally be asked to take additional actions should a call to the address be received. This may involve increasing the number of fire resources sent to the address, or making urgent contact with the Police and other agencies.

Response

Measure		January 2021	February 2021	March 2021	Reporting period average	Q4 2019/20 average	Rolling 12 month average
1	Total Emergency calls answered	2369	2458	2853	2560	2645	2743
2	Number of Mobilisations	1441	1580	1628	1550	1559	1520

*Definitions are available in appendix A

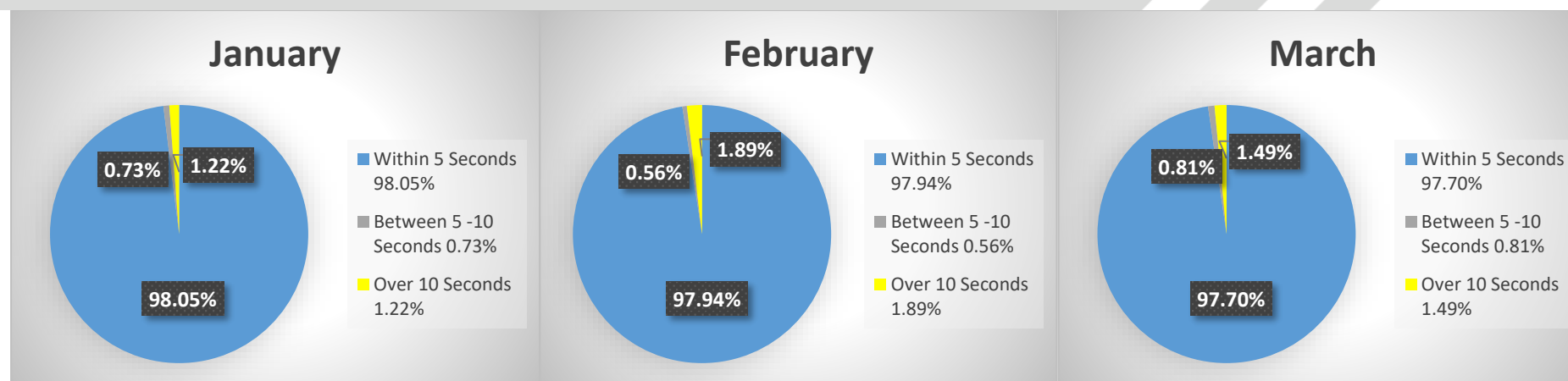
The number of incoming emergency calls handled by TVFCS reduced by 3.21% in comparison with the equivalent quarter in 2019/20. This is consistent with the trend observed throughout the year, which began when restrictions on public movement and commercial activity were introduced as part of the national response to COVID19 on March 23rd 2020.

In contrast with previous quarters, this pattern is not replicated in the number of mobilisations which took place during the period with mobilisations in the period being consistent with 2019/20. This is a result of less 'repeat' calls being received to incidents than has been the case over the last 12 months, and less calls being received which ultimately did not require a Fire Service response after being 'challenged'.

Measure*		2020/21 Target	January 2021	February 2021	March 2021	Reporting period average	Q4 2019/20 Average	Rolling 12 month average
3	Emergency calls answered within 5 seconds	92%	98.05%	97.94%	97.11%	97.70%	96.68%	96.39%
4	Emergency calls answered within 10 seconds	97%	98.78%	98.50%	98.24%	98.51%	98.48%	98.24%

*Definitions are available in appendix A

TVFCS Joint Committee Performance Report

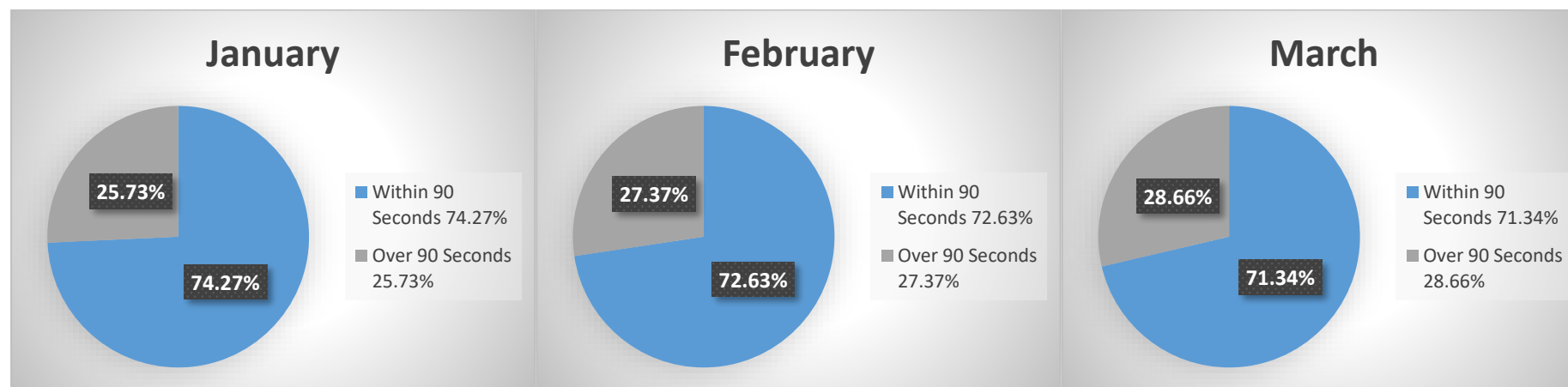


This measure examines call waiting times by looking at the performance of TVFCS staff when answering emergency calls. It sets two targets for how quickly control operators should pick up an emergency call when it comes into the control room. We measure whether a call is picked up within 5 or 10 seconds and the expected performance is that this will be done on 92% or 97% of occasions respectively. Performance against these targets is very good and the targets are routinely exceeded. In reality this means that the majority (97% or more) of all emergency calls that come into TVFCS will be picked in 10 seconds or less. The actual figures for Q4 show that, on average, control operators picked up 97.70% of all emergency call within 5 seconds and 98.51% of all emergency calls within 10 seconds.

The small number of occasions where these times are exceeded are associated with periods of higher demand where a number of calls are received simultaneously, this can be as a result of a large number of calls being received in a relatively short period of time, either as a result of single incident which is visible to a large number of people (for example, a fire involving grass on the side of a major road) or as a result of environmental conditions affecting large numbers of people simultaneously, such as exceptionally heavy rainfall causing flooding.

TVFCS Joint Committee Performance Report

Measure*		2020/21 Target	January 2021	February 2021	March 2021	Reporting Period Average	Q4 2019/20 Average	Rolling 12 Month Average
5	% occasions where time to alert station is within 90 seconds of the emergency call being answered.	80%	74.27%	72.63%	71.34%	72.74%	74.49%	71.37%



TVFCS has seen the expected improvement in this area which was anticipated as the staff recruited earlier in the year developed more confidence in their abilities. Although performance has notably improved compared with Q3, it remains slightly below the levels achieved 12 months ago. We believe that this can still be partially attributed to the issues we have experienced relating to call challenging automatic fire alarm activations in commercial premises during the pandemic. We would expect to see performance improve further as social distancing measures are relaxed and premises begin to return to more normal levels of occupancy.

During the quarter, TVFCS successfully challenged 675 emergency calls. In addition to calls to alarms where FRS attendance is not required in Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire, this figure also includes a large number of calls to other incident types where, through extended questioning of the caller, it is identified that an agency other than the Fire & Rescue Service is more appropriate to provide the assistance that the caller

TVFCS Joint Committee Performance Report

requires. Whilst this call challenge process can lead to extended call handling times, it is a vital aspect of the overall response strategy of the FRS as it preserves the availability of resources to attend incidents where life and property are threatened and simultaneously reduces the risk posed to the public and firefighters when responding to incidents under 'blue light' conditions.

Measure		2020/21 Target	January 2021	February 2021	March 2021	Reporting period average	Q4 2019/20	Rolling 12 month average
6	Average time to alert station in seconds – Primary Fires	N/A	67	60	67	65	66	67
7	Average Time to alert station in seconds – Secondary Fires	N/A	78	79	78	78	68	79
9	Average time to alert station in seconds – Road Traffic Collisions	N/A	86	94	96	92	83	88

*Definitions are available in appendix A

The average time taken to alert a station following a call being answered, where a mobilisation is required, remains a useful measure to determine how effectively Control staff are able to handle calls. The incident types included in this reporting measure are those which are most often dealt with by the Control room with the potential to involve a threat to life and/or damage to property. On average, TVFCS staff take 90 seconds or less to handle these types of calls, further evidencing their role in supporting the performance of the three FRS' against their Integrated Risk Management or Public Safety Plans and in protecting communities across the Thames Valley.

Primary fires are typically incidents which pose a higher risk to life and property, as they generally relate to fires occurring within buildings. Throughout the period, TVFCS have consistently mobilised to these incidents within 90 seconds. TVFCS continue to achieve strong results when handling calls to these incidents, with the average time taken during the quarter being well within the 90 second target.

Secondary fires tend to be smaller, predominantly outdoor fires, which can often be more difficult to locate than fires involving buildings. It is therefore expected that Control staff will take slightly longer to handle these calls and this is reflected in the statistics for the period. The average time taken to handle these calls has increased compared with 2019/20, but still remains within target for the quarter.

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Road traffic collisions (RTCs) typically take longer to locate than many other incident types, as callers are often not familiar with the area they are travelling in, and are often only able to pinpoint their location as being between two notable points, for example roundabouts or other landmarks, which can make identifying a precise location challenging. A large number of calls to road traffic collisions are passed to TVFCS by the Police or Ambulance Service, which means that assistive technology for location identification such as BT Advanced Mobile Location cannot be used. Although the average call handling time for these incidents remains under 90 seconds on average, an increase can be seen compared with 2019/20. Investigations by the TVFCS management team indicate that this is being caused by the revision of protocols for the handling of calls reporting RTCs which come from partner agencies. This protocol change leads to slightly longer call handling times, but results in a better use of FRS resources in response to these types of incidents.

Resilience

During the Quarter, agreed crewing levels were maintained on 100% of occasions. Although levels of sickness absence rose during the quarter, the willingness of TVFCS shift based staff to provide additional cover during the period has meant that no cover has been required of the Control room's management team at night or over weekends, allowing those staff to dedicate their time to other activities.

TVFCS plans include a quarterly full evacuation exercise, with staff relocating to the secondary control room facility at Kidlington. Due to the restrictions associated with COVID19, the physical evacuation exercises have been suspended and replaced with simulated evacuation exercises.

Due to the absence of a key staff member within TVFCS during Q1, no exercise took place during the quarter. Additional resilience has been put in place within the TVFCS management team to prevent this situation recurring in the future.

Staffordshire & West Midlands Fire Control (S&WMFC) are due to be moving to the same Capita Vision 4 mobilising system used in TVFCS during Q1 2021/22. Once this upgrade is complete, work will take place to locate a TVFCS server in S&WMFC, creating a more sophisticated fallback solution.

Data and Intelligence

During Quarter 4 2020/21, all requests for change submitted by the FRS to TVFCS were processed within 5 working days of the request being received. These included requests to amend the Pre-determined attendance of fire and rescue assets for specific locations, add or amend details of newly promoted FRS officers, changes to details relating to fire assets appliances and changes to FRS procedures carried out by TVFCS staff when dealing with particular types of events.

A number of requests for information to assist with investigations have been received from Thames Valley Police during the quarter. These requests are referred to the relevant FRS for approval before being released to ensure all relevant data protection legislation is complied with.

Financial Position

	<i>Total Annual Budget</i>	<i>Actual Outturn Expenditure To 31st March 2021</i>	<i>Variance = Outturn - Annual Budget</i>	<i>Variance %</i>
Staff	1,764,060	1,782,586	18,527	1.05%
Corporate	308,250	308,250	0	0
Other	35,740	35,524	-216	- 0.60%
Technology	247,060	215,125	-31,935	-12.93%
Total Budgeted Expenditure	2,355,110	2,341,485	-13,624	-0.58%

Appendix A

Performance Measure Definitions

Measure	Description
% of occasions where the time to answer emergency calls is within 5 seconds	This measure uses the time taken from when the Fire Control Room system receives an emergency incoming call alert to the moment they are answered by a TVFCS Operator.
% of occasions where the time to answer emergency calls is within 10 seconds	This measure uses the time taken from when the Fire Control Room system receives an emergency incoming call alert to the moment they are answered by a TVFCS Operator.
% of occasions where time to mobilise is within 90 seconds	This measure is calculated from when emergency calls are answered to when control room staff operate equipment at a station notifying crews that they are required to respond.
Average time to alert station in seconds – Primary Fires	The average number of seconds elapsed between an emergency call being answered and control staff operating equipment at a station notifying crews that they are required to mobilise when responding to primary fires. Primary fires are defined as 'more serious fires that harm people or cause damage to property'.
Average time to alert station in seconds – Secondary Fires	The average number of seconds elapsed between an emergency call being answered and control staff operating equipment at a station notifying crews that they are required to mobilise when responding to secondary fires. Secondary fires are defined as 'generally small outdoor fires, not involving people or property'.
Average time to alert station in seconds – Road Traffic Collisions	The average number of seconds elapsed between an emergency call being answered and control staff operating equipment at a station notifying crews that they are required to mobilise when responding to road traffic collisions.

Appendix B

Budget Summary

	Total Annual Budget	Actual Outturn Expenditure To 31st March 2021	Variance = Outturn - Annual Budget	Variance %	Commentary
Staff					
Employment Costs	1,753,010	1,768,802	15,792	0.90%	The variance in this area is caused by an unexpected increase in costs associated with contributions to the Local Government Pension Scheme.
Mileage and Subsistence	7,000	2,894	-4,106	-58.66%	COVID19 has meant that the majority of physical meetings, both within the Thames Valley and nationally have either been cancelled or held virtually. This has greatly reduced travelling and

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					associated costs for members of the TVFCS management team. As we move out of the pandemic, it is likely that a number of meetings previously held 'face to face' will move onto virtual platforms, with the potential to reduce these costs in future budgets.
Uniform Allowances	3,000	9,050	6,050	201.67%	This relates to an historic allowance paid to some staff for particular items of uniform not provided by the service. It was agreed with the representative body to remove this allowance and provide the uniform items in a different way from December 2023. A payment was been made to all eligible

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					staff to cover provision of this item in the interim period. Ongoing payment of the allowance has ceased.
Training	750	-750	-750	0%	The negative expenditure shown relates to the refund of costs for external training cancelled as a result of COVID19. Due to the restrictions on movement and social distancing, none of the activity scheduled has yet taken place.
Recruitment	300	1,841	1,541	513.67%	The original budget set was based on the aptitude testing of potential new recruits being carried out by TVFCS and RBFPS staff on site. COVID19 restrictions meant that this approach

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					was not possible and testing had to be moved to online platforms with higher costs. This approach is being reviewed as COVID restrictions ease.
Sub Total	1,764,060	1,782,586	18,527	1.05%	
Corporate					
Facilities	98,180	24,545		0%	
Finance	22,720	5,680		0%	
HR	73,070	18,268		0%	
ICT	91,530	22,883		0%	
Liability and Equipment Insurance	7,090	1,773		0%	
Management	15,660	3,915		0%	
Sub Total	308,250	308,250		0%	
Other					

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Professional Services and General Equipment Purchase	5,500	3,621	-1,879	-34.16%	As a result of changes in TVFCS activity related to the pandemic, some anticipated expenditure has not been required.
OFRS Costs (secondary control facility)	42,140	42,140		0%	
TVFCS Alarm Receiving Centre income	-11,900	-10,238	1,663	0%	A small number of Alarm receiving organisations chose not to continue their arrangements as a result of business changes, leading to slightly lower income being received than anticipated.
Sub Total	35,740	35,524	-216	-0.60%	
Technology					
Capita Mobs System (maint)	69,210	56,770	-12,440	-17.97%	Payments were received from Capita during Q2, representing credits due for

					failure to rectify a number of minor faults within the agreed contractual service levels. Due to some internal issues within Capita, TVFCS received credits due for both the 2018/19 financial year and the 2019/20 financial year. These credits can be used to obtain services and upgrades from Capita over and above those set out in the contract, with any remaining credits applied to the Capita Maintenance and Support costs to generate an in year efficiency.
DS3000 (for primary and secondary) ICCS	87,200	69,520	-17,680	-20.28%	Payments were received from Capita during Q2, representing credits due for

					failure to rectify a number of minor faults within the agreed contractual service levels. Due to some internal issues within Capita, TVFCS received credits due for both the 2018/19 financial year and the 2019/20 financial year. These credits can be used to obtain services and upgrades from Capita over and above those set out in the contract, with any remaining credits applied to the Capita Maintenance and Support costs to generate an in year efficiency.
Telephony and Network costs.	49,510	47,866	-1,644	-3.32%	Lower than anticipated call charges have created a small in

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					year efficiency in this area.
Software Maintenance	700	529	-171	-24.43%	A small in year efficiency has been realised as a result of changing some arrangements.
EISEC Services (Primary and Secondary Control)	9,000	9,000	0	0%	
Smart services to switch 999 lines to secondary control or elsewhere	17,340	17,340	0	0%	
Airwave rental (SAN I ,B) (Primary,secondary) (7+8)	14,100	14,100	0	0%	
Sub Total	247,060	215,125	-31,935	-12.93%	
Total Budgeted Expenditure	2,355,110	2,341,485	-13,624	-0.58%	



ITEM	NEXT REPORTING DATE	RECOMMENDED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	LEAD MEMBER	PART I / II
Quarterly Performance Report/Budget Monitoring	16-Dec-21	note	Jim Powell	N/A	Part I
Proposed Budget 2022/23	16-Dec-21	note	Conor Byrne	N/A	Part I
Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme	16-Dec-21	note	Jo Bowcock	N/A	Part I

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