THAMES VALLEY FIRE CONTROL SERVICE

SUBJECT	**ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26**
PRESENTED TO:	**TVFCS JOINT COMMITTEE**
DATE OF MEETING	**13 JULY 2026**
LEAD OFFICER	**AREA COMMANDER PAUL SCANES**
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 2025/26.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That the Joint Committee **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 2025/26 this was Councillor Duncan Banks (B&MKFA).

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 2026/27 and the key areas of work required to continue making improvements to TVFCS on behalf of the three Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services (TVFRS).

3.3 TVFCS continues to be the flagship of collaboration in the region since going live in April 2015. The control room handles calls and mobilises resources for the three TV FRSs.

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 over a 15 year period up to 2030.

4. PERFORMANCE

4.1 TVFCS is measured against a set of targets agreed by JCG and endorsed by the Joint Committee and these are reviewed as part of the scrutiny of performance reporting. Most measures are reported to the Joint Committee quarterly, with further measures reported annually. The annually reported measures are included with this report as (Appendix B).

4.2 Due to some technical issues which have affected the ageing TVFCS Command and Control (C&C) system, there are gaps in the available data relating to the number of incoming calls handled by TVFCS, and the speed with which they are answered. Where data is reliably available, TVFCS Control staff perform strongly against the measure for answering calls quickly, with the target being comfortably exceeded on the majority of occasions.

4.3 The measures used to monitor the speed with which TVFCS mobilise fire appliances in response to calls have been regularly reviewed by the TVFCS Management team and JCG. Measures have now been broken down by incident type to allow managers to develop a more detailed understanding of TVFCS performance. TVFCS perform strongly in their response to fires in buildings, with mobilisation times for this key incident type being consistently faster than the target. TVFCS staff find it more challenging to achieve the target in relation to calls to outdoor fires, fires in vehicles and road traffic collisions where it can be more difficulty to obtain an accurate location. Many calls of this nature are passed to TVFCS by other agencies, who do not have access to the same geolocation tools within their C&C platforms as TVFCS and instead rely on third party geolocation systems. Integration with a wider range of geolocation tools has been included within the specification for the replacement TVFCS C&C system with a view to improving call handling times in these situations.

5. STAFFING

5.1 Following nearly two years with no staff choosing to leave TVFCS, some turnover has been experienced towards the end of the 2025/26 financial year. TVFCS recruitment has taken place to ensure that the establishment remains fully filled. Leaver data is analysed by the TVFCS Management team and RBFRS HR Department to identify trends relating to leavers. No trends have been identified relating to recent resignations.

5.2 An increase in the percentage of working time lost to sickness has been noted during the final quarter of 2025/26. This is largely attributable to an increase in long term sickness, with a number of staff requiring extended absence.

6. YEAR END FINANCIAL POSITION

6.1 The budget for TVFCS is set at the December meeting of the Joint Committee each year. The budget for TVFCS for 2024/25 was £3,007,294. At year end, the actual expenditure was £2,971,467 creating a variance of -£35,827 (-1.19%). The principle cause of this variance was staff turnover during the final quarter of the year.

7. NOTABLE ACTIVITY

7.1 April 23rd 2025 was the 10th anniversary of TVFCS being a 'live' operational Control room. A number of events took place throughout April to mark this significant milestone. A formal event was held at Royal Berkshire FRS (RBFRS) Headquarters on 23rd April, attended by councillors, former Control staff, members of the original project team and the High Sherrif of the Royal County of Berkshire. TVFCS staff attended events hosted in each county to develop working relationships with operational colleagues and allow TVFCS staff to expand their knowledge of operational equipment and procedures, specialist capabilities and Incident command arrangements. The celebrations culminated in TVFCS staff completing a walk across all three counties over two days, raising the profile of the Control room and engaging with staff from the TVFRSs. This event was very successful and also raised over £3,500 for the Firefighter's Charity.

7.2 At 18:39 on 15th May 2025, TVFCS received the first call to the tragic incident at Bicester Motion in Oxfordshire which resulted in a member of the public and two firefighters losing their lives. This incident had a significant impact on Control staff, with the welfare of those affected being a primary consideration for managers within TVFCS and the three TVFRSs. The requirement to support the various investigations into this incident has, and continues to have, an impact on managerial capacity within TVFCS.

7.3 In September 2025, TVFCS went 'live' on the National 'Multi Agency Incident Transfer' (MAIT) system provided by Central government. This system allows UK FRS Control rooms to exchange information relating to incidents and request resources from one another electronically, without the need for full integration of C&C systems and has been provided as a treatment for recommendations arising from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. TVFCS were one of the first FRS in the UK to adopt MAIT, which is still being rolled out across the sector. It is anticipated that, as the use of the platform is embedded across FRS Control rooms, it will improve the efficiency of 'cross border' working nationally.

7.4 TVFCS have now begun to deliver against a programme of 'High Fidelity' multi agency exercises involving all three TVFRSs and partner agencies. The TVFCS Training Manager has developed scenarios and injects to make these exercises as realistic as possible for TVFCS staff and to allow us to assure changes we have made in response to both the Grenfell Tower and Manchester Arena Inquiries. These exercises have been well received by

Control staff, who have commented on how realist the exercises have been and how much benefit they have had from being involved.

7.5 Work on the TVFCS replacement C&C system began to build momentum towards the end of the year. A detailed technical requirement spec has been developed by the project team, which includes a dedicated subject matter expert from TVFCS, and the procurement process is now well underway.

8. LOOKING FORWARD

8.1 The TVFCS replacement C&C system project is expected to be the primary area of focus this year, with TVFCS managers and Control staff being involved in the tender evaluation process to select a preferred system supplier. It is hoped that the contract will be awarded later this year, at which point the focus will switch to what will inevitably be a complex implementation and delivery phase. This will require a large resource commitment from TVFCS and the three FRSs over the next two years.

8.2 TVFCS will be migrating to the new RBFRS 'staff development system' later this year. TVFCS training materials will all be migrated from legacy platforms onto this new system, which will provide a single place for staff to access training and development materials. It is expected that this will improve the management and recording of both organisational and operational training and will also provide a platform for recording the outcomes of appraisals and staff one to one meetings.

8.3 The JCG will continue to analyse data to determine whether any changes can be made to improve the staffing resilience of TVFCS.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 None.

11. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None.

12. RISK IMPLICATIONS

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

13. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

13.1 TVFCS Joint Coordinating Group.

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 None.

15. APPENDICES

15.1 Appendix B – Annually reported performance measures.

16. CONTACT DETAILS

16.1 Group Manager Simon Harris, harriss@tvfcs.org.uk