

Annex A

Collaborative Working Programmes across the Thames Valley Emergency Services

1. Background

This Annex provides Members with an update on progress relating to the collaborative working programme across the three Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) and other emergency services including Police and Ambulance.

The Thames Valley Collaboration programme focuses on the achievement of the shared key objective:

“Sharing resources on a fair and equitable basis, to support achievement of excellent outcomes for communities across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire.”

This key objective is supported by three critical success factors:

- Deliver better outcomes for the communities of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, Royal Berkshire and Oxfordshire.
- Make changes that result in more effective and efficient services.
- Increase resilience levels across all the Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services.

2. Government Policy and Legislative Context

In September 2016, the then Minister for Policing and the Fire Service, Brandon Lewis, set out the government’s strategic reform agenda for the Fire and Rescue Service in a speech to the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) conference. The Minister identified three distinct ‘pillars of transformation’.

- efficiency and collaboration;
- accountability and transparency;
- workforce reform.

The first two of these pillars were given legislative force with the passage into law of the Policing and Crime Act 2017 which, amongst other things:

- places fire, police and ambulance services under a statutory duty to collaborate where this improves efficiency or effectiveness;
- enables Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to become involved in the governance of fire and rescue services in their area either by becoming a fire authority member or taking over the role of a fire authority completely and, as a potential further step, integrate fire and police within a single employer organisation with an integrated single management team;
- provides for the creation of a ‘rigorous and independent inspection regime’ for fire and rescue in England, with sufficient access to data and

information to ensure robust inspections and the ability to undertake joint inspections with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC).

The Authority has been collaborating with other Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services for several years. Collaboration with other emergency services was already well underway prior to the imposition of a statutory duty to do so. For example with South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) in relation to co-responding and Thames Valley Police in relation to sharing of property and facilities.

This report provides updates on the current strategic, significant and emerging collaboration projects within the Thames Valley. Historical and already embedded collaborations are now considered to be business as usual and not covered in this report.

3. Agreed Collaboration priorities

In February 2017, the three Thames Valley Chief Fire Officers agreed an updated set of collaboration priorities which were fine-tuned in June 2017 and include:

Operational alignment

Building on the success of the Joint Thames Valley Fire Control Service; developing and implementing a single mobilising policy for the Thames Valley which will enable staff in the control room to streamline their responses and free up time and effort to ensure that the community gets the best possible response.

In addition, developing and implementing a common procurement timetable for the three Thames Valley Fire Services to buy the same equipment and appliances.

Fire Protection

The services will work together to produce a single fire protection policy, succession plan and one way of working, providing consistency and opportunities for staff across the Thames Valley.

Risk Modelling

Developing a single risk modelling methodology to enable a consistent way of assessing risk whilst still allowing risk appetite to be defined locally.

Workforce reform

The Services will work together on workforce reform, learning from each other and sharing best practice to enable our staff to have the best possible opportunities and also enable our staff to shape the future of our Service.

Section 4 provides updates on each Fire–Fire collaborative priority.

Emergency Services 'Blue light' collaboration

The work going on with SCAS and TVP needs to be accelerated and highlighted to enable the Thames Valley community to get the best possible service.

Sections 5, 6 and 7 provide updates on priority programmes underway with TVP and SCAS.

The Authority's Corporate Plan 2015 to 2020 has been revised to reflect and align with these reaffirmed collaboration priorities.

4. Collaboration across the Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services.

a) Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS)

Two Gateway reports were completed into the TVFCS programme and it was recommended that a Transition plan was established consisting of three phases:

Phase 1 - Operational: transitioning the service into 'steady state'

Phase 2 - Optimise: to enhance the current ways of working for the Service

Phase 3 - Expand: moving the service forward

Governance is via a TVFCS Joint Committee and the most recent meeting took place in September 2017. As the Thames Valley collaboration programme continues to develop with the TVFCS Phase 2 Transition Plan driving key aspects of the operational alignment work stream, it is planned that the TVFCS Phase 2 Transition plan will become part of the wider collaboration agenda.

Phase 2 of the Transition plan will cover five specific areas:

- Governance, Leadership and Management
- Resilience and Business Continuity
- Performance Management
- Data and Management Information
- Branding, Culture and Identity

Work within these areas will then form specific projects and will be managed using the approved project management processes.

b) Operational alignment

The overarching objective is to align all operational policies, procedures and practices across the three Thames Valley Fire Services. This includes consistent and standard training packages and joint procurement of equipment and appliances. The current focus is on aligning policy and procedures and procuring appliances.

A project has been recently scoped out to set out the timetable for this work.

The benefits include:-

- more effective and efficient service delivery to the public
- more efficient, effective and economic use of resources
- economies of scale and efficiencies through joint procurement of equipment and appliances

This programme builds on the work originally started within the Thames Valley Fire Control project. A joint Thames Valley project team has been working with the aim of creating standardised procedures and incident response across the Thames Valley Services using National Operational Guidance recommendations. Initial recommendations cover incident responses, training and the provision of equipment that will support alignment from original call to incident closure.

This project is a critical aspect of the collaboration work programme and will influence future business requirements for training, procurement and operational alignment.

c) Appliances and equipment

Standardised Type B Appliances

Following a joint procurement process, all Services will now be buying the same type B appliance. Over the next four years, 37 Volvo appliances, all built to a standard specification will be procured. During this period, savings are estimated to be £720,704.

This successful fleet collaboration between the Thames Valley fire services is now bearing fruit with Oxford FRS and Royal Berkshire FRS each having seen four new Volvo appliances delivered this financial year and Buckinghamshire FRS have taken delivery of three of the eight pumps due to them during 2017/18. Further deliveries are due to all three Authorities in 2018/19.

The new appliances are aimed to be placed at stations which most frequently cross borders to improve deployment efficiency. This programme is an excellent example of how joint working can improve service delivery and reduce our service costs.

Standardised Inventory

The three Fire Services have reached agreement regarding a standardised inventory to be carried on the Thames Valley standard fire appliance. This will maximise the benefit of the standard appliance as well as support the introduction of common operating procedures across the region.

The success of the appliance collaboration is also driving forward joint work on procuring equipment and several initiatives are in hand between the 3 authorities to make the most of our united purchasing power, with the added advantage of standardising equipment across the Thames Valley services.

d) Integrated Risk Mapping and Modelling

The aim of this project is to implement a simple risk mapping and modelling methodology across the three Thames Valley Fire Services which is flexible enough to take account of local risk and demographics.

This project builds on collaborative work which has been underway in this area since 2015 with a proof of concept model for the three services developed in 2016.

Identified benefits include more effective and efficient use of response assets across the three services and sharing of resources. This project will also support the operational alignment work stream and assist harmonisation of systems of work.

The re-defined project has been scoped out, Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire have identified an opportunity for a shared resource to embed the model and add resilience. A data sharing and processing agreement is being developed to facilitate this project.

e) Fire Protection

The purpose of this project is to create a single approach to Fire Protection across the Thames Valley, including a single policy, processes, and systems within one function.

This is a newly identified project and recently scoped out. Identified benefits include:

- More effective use of data to identify premises which require an audit; supporting evidence led re inspection programmes.
- Increasing the number of audits being undertaken due to increased capacity created through collaborative working.
- Increased out of hours availability of Fire Protection Officer skills across the Thames Valley.

In addition it is envisaged that additional resources within Fire Protection may be required to meet an increase in demand following the Grenfell Tower enquiry and the review of Building Regulations. Progressing Fire Protection collaborative working now will ensure the Thames Valley is well placed to respond to any increasing or new demands.

f) Workforce Reform

The current priority focuses on introducing consistent approaches to refreshing the workforce to maintain resilience and ensure the three Fire Services are in a position to resource and continually develop the skills for the future.

There are two new inter-dependent projects underway within one work stream which are:

To develop a single recruitment process for Whole time and On Call Firefighters across the Thames Valley and to:

Develop a project to deliver a joint Thames Valley recruit course in April 2018 with new entrants employed on the Buckinghamshire apprenticeship model.

The projects are scoped out and builds on informal joint work already underway covering sharing general workforce plans. Identified benefits of these workforce reform initiatives include:

- Best practice, modern, fit for purpose and consistent approach to recruitment across the Thames Valley.

- Increased diversity of the workforce which positively supports culture change.
- A more cost effective and efficient shared recruitment service achieved through pooling internal and external resources when required.
- Joint approach to apprenticeships recruitment optimises opportunity to draw down the levy on Thames Valley apprenticeships training. The current annual apprenticeships levy paid by the three services is in the order of £280K.
- Future proofed processes flexible enough to accommodate diversification of services.
- Sets the foundation for future workforce reform projects which deliver positive benefits.

g) Shared Resources

A new project currently being scoped out is considering possibilities of creating a single Principal Officer/Level 4 Operational Command Officer rota. The first stage would be to establish a method of showing availability of all Level 4 officers across the three services.

This project seeks to explore maintaining resilience, providing capacity for major protracted incidents, unplanned shortfalls in cover and working towards improved interoperability across the Thames Valley.

5. Collaboration with Thames Valley Police (TVP)

a) Effecting Entry

Alongside Cardiac Arrest Response (CAR) Buckinghamshire FRS joined Royal Berkshire and Oxfordshire in May 2017 for a six-month trial to support SCAS by responding on behalf of TVP to effect entry where patients are suspected or known to be inside a locked property which cannot be accessed by ambulance crews. Historically, responsibility for effecting entry has lain with the police but pressures on resources and a lack of appropriate equipment on front-line police vehicles was routinely resulting in lengthy delays which tied up SCAS and police resources. The trial, which sees all three Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services responding on behalf of Thames Valley Police (TVP) to assist SCAS, has a number of aims:

- To improve patient outcomes by allowing ambulance crews to get to casualties more quickly.
- To reduce the amount of time wasted by SCAS crews awaiting the attendance of TVP to effect entry.
- To ease pressure on TVP resources.
- To reduce repair and boarding-up costs by using our expertise rather than brute force.

Since the go-live date 22 May 2017, Buckinghamshire FRS appliances have been mobilised to 22 'Effecting Entry' incidents, of which, 11 required crews to gain access for SCAS at the scene.

With an average incident duration of 26-minutes (from mobilising to stop), it is clear that crews are making rapid interventions to achieve the first two objectives. Also, as none of the incidents required boarding-up, the signs are promising that the fourth objective is being achieved – stop messages indicate that on seven occasions, short extension ladders were used to gain access.

b) Missing Persons

BFRS and TVP are running a 6 month pilot project whereby TVP can call upon a range of BFRS assets to assist TVP in searching for medium and high risk missing persons. This is an extension of our current 'Assist Other Agency' incident arrangements that cover the provision of thermal imagery, the Drone, boats and Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) and provides specialist assistance that also offers fire crews as an asset to assist with ground searching.

c) Estates

The Authority is continuing to work with TVP on co-location at Princes Risborough, Newport Pagnell and Waddesdon Fire Stations. These are TVP led projects with the Princes Risborough project likely to be first to commence.

6. Collaboration with SCAS

a) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

A new MOU between SCAS and the three FRSs, signed in March 2017, sees SCAS taking responsibility for clinical governance in the fire services across the Thames Valley. This will ultimately lead to greater standardisation, with SCAS delivering all of our Immediate Emergency Care (IEC) training and providing standardised equipment for emergency response vehicles. This common training and equipment enables ambulance and fire crews to work much more effectively alongside each other at any incident involving casualties whether at a medical emergency or a fire incident.

b) Co-responding (CR)

The Authority currently has four co-responder cars based at High Wycombe, Aylesbury, Buckingham and Olney. The High Wycombe car is positively crewed while the rest are operated on an on-call basis. With more and more staff being IEC trained the pool of potential co-responders continues to grow with the only challenge to further recruitment of volunteers being the requirement to undertake a five day blue-light driving course. At Buckingham co-responding is undertaken on the frontline fire appliance by the duty crew.

There are some challenges regarding the future impact on Co-Responding of the Ambulance Response Programme (ARP), which will see the response targets shift for SCAS to focus on a timely attendance of ambulances at incidents where patients are likely to need transportation to hospital. However, there is likely to remain a significant demand for fire resources to support SCAS at incident types where a rapid intervention is critical such as cardiac arrest, stroke and major trauma.

c) Cardiac Arrest Response (CAR)

Alongside Oxfordshire FRS, Buckinghamshire has initiated a six-month trial in May 2017 to deliver CAR in support of SCAS from all of our frontline fire engines. With a patient's chances of survival dropping by around 10 per cent with every minute that passes following a cardiac arrest, the initiative aimed to mobilise fire resources in support of SCAS to get the earliest possible intervention and maximise the chances of survival for the patient. Unfortunately, the SCAS mobilising system is not currently able to show the location of fire resources to the control operators who despatch resources. This is not ideal, and as a result there has yet to be a mobilisation under CAR in Buckinghamshire or Oxfordshire since the trial commenced. However, Hampshire FRS have commissioned some software which will allow the SCAS and fire control mobilising systems to communicate in the near future and this could be a future fix for the current issues that are being experienced.

d) Future plans

The CAR and Effecting Entry initiatives will both be evaluated in November and recommendations made on whether these ways of working should be permanently adopted.

Regular meetings between representatives of the three TVFRSs and SCAS continue to seek and discuss further opportunities for collaboration.

Discussions with Hampshire FRS and SCAS are underway to identify collaborative practices to be shared in future – most notably the software mentioned above in the CAR section above.

7. Fire Police and SCAS Collaboration

a) Milton Keynes Hub

Thames Valley Policy (TVP) and South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) are confirmed partners for the Blue Light Hub in Milton Keynes and a number of other public sector partners are expressing interest in co-locating to the second floor of the new building. The process of securing a construction contract is well under way with announcement of the successful contractor due in early October 2017. There will then be a joint client/contractor process to award the build lots in the period up to January 2018, at which time it is anticipated the full construction build contract will be signed off. Construction is due to start in March 2018 with completion due around 18 months later.

b) Joint Emergency Services Interoperability

Drone Collaboration

The use of the Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service drone is increasing, with benefits ranging from the gathering of aerial imagery for risk information and pre-planning purposes, to assisting partner agencies in the search for missing persons. Operationally they have provided significant benefits to the Incident Commander and partner agencies by informing their decision making processes. The use of drone imagery for collapsed structures has assisted fire investigation officers to determine the likely origin and cause of the fire, whilst providing structural engineers with the data they require to make informed

decisions about the structural integrity of a building. In terms of building fires, they provide critical information such as the location of previously unseen gas cylinders, or the direction and speed of fire spread in buildings and large open areas. It is used as an asset for all three Thames Valley FRS and the information gained influences an Incident Commander's tactical plan, making fire ground operations safer and more efficient.