

Collaboration

Review

Emergency Services have a duty to collaborate under the Policing and Crime Act 2017. The Thames Valley Collaboration Group continues to drive activity in this area and much of the collaboration activity is coordinated via the Collaboration Steering Group with political and non-executive leadership representation from across the three Fire and Rescue Services, Thames Valley Police (TVP) and the South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) and I represent RBFA as lead member in this forum.

The elected members of the Steering Group have supported officers in delivering year two objectives of the collaboration partnerships [five year plan](#). This has seen the successful implementation of replacement Breathing Apparatus sets across the Thames Valley which will bring a number of benefits in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. Officers are currently evaluating these benefits which should see a reduction in fire engine mobilisations to cross border incidents, which will result in both financial savings and a more effective approach to managing risk by maintaining fire engine availability ensuring we maximise the safety of the residents of Royal Berkshire.

RBFRS has made significant progress in support of a Thames Valley wide data sharing project known as 'Thames Valley Together'. This project has been driven by the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit and will help RBFA meet its statutory obligations under the [Serious Violence Duty](#). Data sharing and intelligence is fundamental to planning meaningful interventions to deliver good outcomes for our communities in relation to both violence reduction and fire safety.

Thames Valley FRS have come together to review the recommendations of the [Manchester Arena Inquiry \(Volume 2\)](#) and a combined FRS working group was formed. Throughout 2023/24, these teams have been working through a wide range of actions relating to these recommendations including policy review and new equipment and training, with a particular focus on specialist officer capabilities and a new mass casualty triage tool. These improvements will ensure the service is well prepared to support victims should a similar event occur in our county.

The three Thames Valley Fire Services are also working together to align how they respond to Automatic Fire Alarms (AFA) and in February 2024, RBFA members agreed to [consult](#) on a range of options to reduce the numbers of false alarms it attends. This coincides with a [consultation](#) being undertaken by Oxfordshire FRS and Buckinghamshire FRS have commissioned a project to seek similar outcomes.

Work continues on existing multi-year projects including the development of a joint Forensic Fire Scene Investigation Unit (FFSIU) with our colleagues in Thames Valley Police in order to meet the substantial demands required by new legislative and regulatory requirements. Following a 'soft launch' on 20 March 2023 the team are moving closer to the pre-accreditation stage.

The Incident Command Support project has delivered a number of improvements to aligned ways of working that support effective and safe resolution of incidents. This includes looking at how the service can improve the way it manages the flow of information between fire control and the incident ground and this work will continue into 24/25.

Ongoing and looking forward

Work on the existing projects described above will continue into 24/25. However, aligned to the five year plan themes there are a number of new initiatives that will be considered over the coming year.

Firstly, services will consider a proposal around the procurement and use of Body Worn Video. FRS National Operational Guidance recommends considering their use and they are mentioned in the Manchester recommendations. This capability can provide a number of benefits for frontline service delivery personnel and phase one of the project will deliver a business case to enable services to make an informed decision whether to adopt this capability.

Secondly, officers will consider a proposal to develop a Thames Valley wide Operational and Technical Communications strategy. The purpose of this piece of work is to support a joined-up approach to how services will plan for and make the best use of operational technology to ensure it is fit for the future and provides an effective Response to emergencies. This will include looking at how Thames Valley

Fire Control can support the public to use mobile phone video technology to send video of incidents directly into the control room, helping control staff to make informed mobilising decisions.

Lastly, TVFRS will consider commissioning a scoping exercise to look at how it can make the most efficient and effective use of its operational training resources across the Thames Valley.

Successful collaboration requires good governance and a shared vision of the future. I am confident RBFA and our partners have these elements fully embedded through the 2022-2027 business plan along with strong, mature relationships that will ensure we continue to deliver public value over the coming year.

Cllr Simon Werner, Collaboration Lead Member.