

THAMES VALLEY FIRE CONTROL SERVICE



SUBJECT	TVFCS JOINT COMMITTEE
PRESENTED TO:	17 MARCH 2025
DATE OF MEETING	THAMES VALLEY FIRE CONTROL - FUTURE REPLACEMENT PROJECT - SCOPING WORKSHOP UPDATE
LEAD OFFICER	SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OFFICERS
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	TO AGREE

1. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) went operationally live in 2015. The original business case predicted services would collectively save £1 million per year when compared to predicted costs of running their legacy, individual control rooms. TVFCS was one of the first of its kind, providing a joint operating model across the three Thames Valley FRS and providing an essential service to over two million people across the three counties.
- 1.2 The TVFCS Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) expires in April 2030. Clause 30 of the agreement requires each Fire Authority to discuss continued participation in a Joint Fire Control (TVFCS) by April 2027, reaching agreement on future provision by April 2028.
- 1.3 This timescale aligns to current contractual arrangements for TVFCS mobilising systems which, as previously agreed by Authorities, have been extended to April 2028 with options to extend for a further two years.
- 1.4 The scale and complexity of replacing core TVFCS systems and agreeing a new, refreshed Inter Authority Agreement is likely to take three to four years and will require dedicated and specialist resources to achieve.

1.5 To manage this complexity, minimise risk of business continuity impacts and provide sufficient contingency for business transition, it is recommended that Authorities commission a replacement project. This project will commence in 2025/26 in order to deliver new systems and a refreshed IAA by April 2028, with a contingency of April 2029.

1.6 On 12 December 2024 members of the Joint Committee approved the following recommendations in the TVFCS Replacement project mandate:

AGREE to recommend to Authorities in principle, to continue participating in TVFCS beyond 2030 by approving this project mandate, which recommends the TVFCS replacement project commence in 2025/26.

NOTE that a final decision and full approval, or otherwise, on future participation in TVFCS and further investment in the replacement project will be taken on presentation of the Full Business Case in December 2025.

APPROVE the Capital expenditure profile for 2025/26, enabling investment in phase 1 project resourcing to deliver the Full Business Case.

1.7 This report therefore serves to provide information regarding building a comprehensive project brief for the future replacement of the TVFCS Command and Control systems and associated technologies, ensuring an efficient, effective and robust service is provided into the next decade and beyond.

2 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 To **AGREE** the progression of building a business case for the future replacement of the TVFCS Command and Control systems and associated technologies.

2.2 To **NOTE** this will support an intent to deliver an Outline Business Case to the Joint Committee in July 2025.

3 REPORT

3.1 Outline

3.1.1 This report provides the requirements and scope for a replacement command and control system and takes into account the TVFCS Concept of Operations.

3.1.2 Replacement of the systems in TVFCS will require significant stakeholder and sector engagement and market research. This is needed to ensure development of a robust, resilient and sustainable specification that translates into a meaningful business case, identifying the optimal solution for both public finances and public safety. Likely contract costs dictate a procurement process commensurate with a high value, long term, mission critical contract. Early engagement with suppliers indicates that implementation of a new solution could take around two years.

3.2 System scoping requirements – Base line

To achieve a minimum level of service;

- 3.2.1 Future systems should have no degradation of the current service levels being provided. Using the current performance measures and analytics, a future provision of TVFCS should not reduce the current call handling time, capability of mobilisation and command of the current service.
- 3.2.2 Future systems should adhere to the current principle of “quickest is quickest”, providing allowances for borderless mobilising between FRS’.
- 3.2.3 Future services will allow for the utilisation of the current set of technical systems or a suitable, agreed and improved version which provides the same level of service or better (e.g. Automatic Vehicle Location System (AVLS), Advanced Mobile Location (AML)/ Enhanced Information Service for Emergency Calls (EISEC), Dynamic Group Number Assignment (DGNA), Talk Group (TG) per incident/multiple TG, status messaging, BOSS mobile, Multi Agency Incident Transfer (MAIT).
- 3.2.4 Future systems will look to minimise the use of voice monitoring and maximise the use of data in the provision of their mobilising system.
- 3.2.5 Future systems will provide capability for the sharing of information across control rooms, linking into multi-agency control systems where appropriate.
- 3.2.6 Future systems will support mobilisation for national incident response, and effective control of assets at major incidents.
- 3.2.7 Future systems will support operational access to FRS risk information, and the sharing of information with front-line crews. Systems will also support the provision of Fire Survival Guidance to affected persons.
- 3.2.8 Future systems will communicate and coordinate effectively with FRS availability systems, allowing efficient access to data and attributes.

3.3 System scope

For the purpose of this report, the scope of a future TVFCS replacement project has been defined according to three areas:

- Capability and Effectiveness
- Capacity and Efficiency
- Resilience and sustainability

3.4 Capability and Effectiveness

- 3.4.1 Any future system should provide the opportunity for FRS to consider the use of dynamic cover tools. These systems provide greater levels of capability for programming and managing the availability of FRS assets and the

coordination of appliances according to updated situational changes within the Thames Valley.

- 3.4.2 Future systems should also allow for the development of an improved attribute-based mobilisation system. Consideration may also be made towards a tiered response, designed to improve resilience of mobilised assets.
- 3.4.3 Any new system should aim to improve or enhance the current asset management and availability system: consideration will be needed as to whether a “data lake” or “warehouse” approach best suits the specific needs of the TVFRS for the integration of these.
- 3.4.4 In order to both manage and mitigate risks; any new system will look to improve the current use of data and data sharing both within TVFCS and with partner agencies. This will involve the use of both the current MAIT and a move towards MAIT2.
- 3.4.5 Consideration will also be given to the integration of new technologies: this may include video streaming capabilities, body worn video, 999-eye, GoodSAM, advanced location tool (e.g. W3W). There will also be capability for Fire Survival Guidance applications to be used.
- 3.4.6 Any new system should support simultaneous information sharing between FRS incident command units, the central control room and any FRS bridgehead operationally in use.
- 3.4.7 A future control system will be Emergency Service Network (ESN) compliant and will look to maximise the use of ESN functionality through approved user services. ESN is a national (government led) project, which is currently underway to procure and deploy the ESN which, when implemented, will replace the current Airwave service used by the emergency services in Great Britain (England, Wales and Scotland).
- 3.4.8 Finally, any agreed contract will look to build in stipulations for “future-proofing” technology in order to provide reassurance to partners.

3.5 Capacity and Efficiency

- 3.5.1 In terms of efficiency, the replacement programme will look to provide contractual arrangements that maximise return on investment of any capital assets, considering product lifecycle and asset refresh options.
- 3.5.2 The program will aim to deliver a scalable solution that provides future options for potential additional partner agencies who may wish to join at a later date.
- 3.5.3 In terms of system-efficiency, any new control system will look to maximise the use of AI assisted technology to deploy efficient automation of workflows. Aligned to this, solutions will be identified which reduced the demand for FRS maintenance and support services.

- 3.5.4 A review of National Operational Guidance will also take place in order to ensure that resource allocations, particularly for low frequency/high impact scenarios, are appropriate.
- 3.5.5 A review will also take place to identify relationships between other TVFCS contracts, and FRS contracts related to TVFCS, to identify efficiencies in delivery and management across the suite of contracted services.

3.6 Resilience and sustainability

- 3.6.1 An upgraded and improved TVFCS function will lead to a review of the current fallback partner arrangements, specifically the use of Kidlington Fire Station as secondary control, leading to an improvement or amendment of this capability.
 - 3.6.2 The current system resilience and business continuity functions will be enhanced and improved by any future system. This may be facilitated alongside a review of the relevant National Operational Guidance and Control Fire Standard, which stipulates requirements for a resilient control room and resilient communications, both into and out of control rooms (e.g. secondary/tertiary bearers, 999 failure).
- 3.7 The planning assumption is that an intent to deliver an Outline Business Case to the Joint Committee in July 2025, ahead of the Full Business Case being presented to the Joint Committee in December 2025. The business case will recommend the proposed optimal replacement solution, identify any future funding gaps and identify phase 2 resourcing. At this point, and through both TVFCS and FRS budget setting processes, Authorities will be required to make final a decision to continue to participate in TVFCS (and subsequently the replacement programme) or terminate the agreement.

4. COMPLIANCE WITH THE TVFCS PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

- 4.1 This report complies with the TVFCS Inter Authority Agreement (IAA).

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Refer to Section 5 of the TVFCS replacement project mandate approved 12 December 2024 (see background papers).

Project Resource Summary

Role	Cost 25/26
Programme management (see 5.5)	14,000
Business Analyst (see 5.6)	75,000
Project manager (see 5.7)	28,000
Project support (see 5.8)	42,000
SME/Senior User (see 5.9)	35,000
Total	194,000

Proposed Annual Capex Profile - 2025/26

Item	£
Project resourcing	194,000
EISEC servers	4,000
Contingency	19,900
Total	217,900

6. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 Part 2 Core Functions, Section 7 Fire-fighting (2) (c) *'A fire and rescue authority must make provision for the purpose of-... make arrangements for dealing with calls for help and for summoning personnel'*.

6.2 The Policing and Crime Act 2017 Section 2 (1) states a relevant service *"must keep under consideration whether entering into a collaboration agreement with one or more other relevant emergency services in England could be in the interests of the efficiency or effectiveness of that service and those other services."*

7. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Equality Diversity & Inclusion will be a key element of the scoping process, linked to service equality objectives, to provide confidence and assurance to TVFRS that the preferred supplier aligns to FRS ethics and has systems and processes in place that meet our expectations.

8. **RISK IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 If the replacement of TVFCS is not considered in a timely way and that any replacement project is not properly commissioned or adequately resourced there is a high likelihood that Authorities will face significant challenges in delivering the statutory duty described in section 6.1. This would result from having unsuitable equipment, systems and governance arrangements in place to deliver that service.

9. **CONTRIBUTION TO SERVICE AIMS**

9.1 As stated in the TVFCS IAA schedule 2: 'Primary objectives':

9.2 To satisfy the core functions of the Fire Authorities as defined in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

9.3 To satisfy the statutory duty of all the Fire Authorities as category one responders as defined in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

9.4 To improve the resilience, effectiveness and efficiency of the current control room function.

9.5 To ensure TVFCS is integral in delivering the outputs demanded of the Fire Authorities' Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs).

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

10.1 Joint Coordinating Group.

10.2 Joint Committee workshop.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Agenda for Thames Valley Fire Control Service Joint Committee on Thursday, 12th December, 2024, 2.00 pm | Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)

[9 - TVFCS replacement project mandate.pdf](#)

12. APPENDICES

12.1 None.

13. CONTACT DETAILS

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