

# Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service's Statement of Assurance 2021-22

This important document outlines the way we meet our statutory duties.

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## Introduction

Welcome to Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service's Statement of Assurance for 2021 to 2022. As the Cabinet Member and Chief Fire Officer for Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, we are pleased to present this statement of assurance for our local communities outlining how we meet the statutory duties of the Fire and Rescue Services Act, Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order, Civil Contingencies Act and the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

**Councillor Jenny Hannaby**, Cabinet Member for Community Safety Services

**Rob MacDougall**, Director of Community Safety and Chief Fire Officer

## What is a Statement of Assurance?

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018 sets out a requirement for all fire and rescue authorities to provide annual assurance on financial, governance and operational matters through publishing an Annual Statement of Assurance. Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Services Annual Statement of Assurance confirms that we are demonstrating due regard to the requirements included in the framework and the expectations set out in the authorities' risk management plans. The Service also produces a separate Annual Report for 2021/22 detailing performance in all areas of service delivery.

[You can read a copy of the Annual Report 2021/22 here.](#)

## Governance

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority is the designated Fire and Rescue Authority for the County of Oxfordshire. It has a primary responsibility to protect the community, reduce harm and save lives through prevention, protection and response. The Chief Fire Officer and the Cabinet Member for Community Services and Safety ensure the Council meets its legal and operational responsibilities to provide an effective fire and rescue service for Oxfordshire's communities.

OFRS governance is carefully managed through regularly reviewed policies, procedures and assurance systems managed by monitoring Officers and Senior Leadership Officers. Effective systems of internal control are assured through a [corporate governance framework](#). The Service adheres to the principles of the CIPFA / SOLACE framework "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government". Our Annual Governance statement demonstrates that we have fulfilled its obligations under this framework.

Further information can be found in our Annual Governance Statement, which is included in our Statement of Accounts publication. A link to this information is included at the end of this document.

## Finance

Our budget for 2021-2022

The total expenditure for Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service including corporate core costs was £27.154 million between 2021/22. This is equivalent to just 10.2p a day per person in Oxfordshire or £37.43 p/annum. The Services minimises its corporate running costs wherever possible through sharing business support functions with Oxfordshire County Council

Financial data is taken from the Local Authority Revenue Expenditure and Financing 2021-22, Provisional Outturn return. Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS) are an integral part of Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) who provide the [Statement of Accounts](#), audit reports and [Pay Policy](#) statement. A summary of the [Auditors' Report](#) and findings can be found in the [Annual Audit letter](#).

## Annual report 2021/22

As part of our statutory reporting requirements, the Services produces a detailed Annual Report on performance across all areas of Service Delivery. This Report highlights where we have done well, identify new incidents trends and explore areas for improvement. The Annual Report also helps us decide where to focus our efforts and resources for the future. This Report is also essential to our approach with integrating risk management. You can read a copy of the [2021/22, Annual Report here](#).

## Operational

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service functions within a clearly defined statutory and policy framework. We address these core functions through our Community Risk Management Plan which identifies and assesses foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect our community. You can find out more about legislative duties that govern Fire and Rescue Services by following the hyperlinks at the end of this document.

## Community Risk Management Plan 2022/26 (CRMP)

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service has produced a detailed CRMP outlining how we will reduce risk from fire and other emergencies from 2022 to 2026. The plan was published following extensive consultation and research to ensure our response, prevention, protection priorities take into account both current and future risks. Our CRMP aligns directly with the County Council's vision and Corporate objectives highlighting how we will work with statutory agencies, businesses and communities to reduce risk from fire and other emergencies. The plan also outlines how we will carry out our statutory responsibility to support national emergencies in other parts of the UK.

[You can read a copy of the CRMP 2022-26 here](#)

## HMICFRS Inspection Report 2021/22

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

The HMICFRS 2021/22 inspection report is an important independent examination of performance across Oxfordshire FRS. The Service were really pleased to have been awarded a "good" rating in the four inspection areas covering effectiveness, efficiency and how we look after our people. HMICFRS inspectors found that:

- The Services understanding of risk and demand was effective and supported its prevention and protection activities.
- Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service was financially stable and well supported by the County Council and has a very positive culture that actively promotes equality, diversity, and inclusion
- Support for health and wellbeing was excellent and the Service was working hard to listen to staff

[You can read Oxfordshire Fire and Rescues HMICFRS Inspection 2021/22 report here](#).

## Prevention Activity

The Prevention Team delivers education, advice and support to help communities reduce fires and accidents from happening in the first place. In 2021/22, prevention services quickly adapted to Covid-19 related restrictions through significantly increasing social media campaigning to deliver safety advice. As restrictions eased, the Service has continued with developing both in person and digital initiatives to reach the widest audiences possible.

## Safeguarding

Safeguarding continues to remain a priority for Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service. We have continued to embed regular training and learning at all levels of the organisation. The Service collaborates with our many partners in health, social care and voluntary services to identify and support the most vulnerable members of the community. We also participated in Oxfordshire's Annual Safeguarding Board's, peer review assessment and were pleased to have achieved a positive rating across each of the standards set by the Board. A copy of their 2021/22 annual report is available [here](#).

## Fire Protection Activity

Fire Protection activities quickly adapted to pandemic restrictions utilising technological solutions to support business fire safety. As restrictions lifted we saw a return to an active and directive programme of fire safety inspections that prioritised the highest risk premises using a comprehensive risk and intelligence led Inspection Programme. Key achievements between 2021/22 included:

- The Building Control Liaison team responding to 100% of building consultations within the statutory 15-day time limit.
- The Primary Authority team doubled the number of contracted hours to provide strategic-level fire safety precautions to housing associations occupied by the most vulnerable in the community.
- The Protection Team invested in extensive engagement with businesses to ensure the implications of recent legislation (Fire Safety Act 2021) are properly understood.

## Emergency Response

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue adapted to Covid-19 related challenges through 2021 and 2022 to continue to deliver emergency response services. HMICFRS inspectors recognised that the Service's response plan is linked to the risks identified in its CRMP. Our fire engines, response staff and working patterns enable the Service to respond flexibly to fires and other emergencies. Initiatives to improve and increase capacity to more effectively resource appliances have been introduced for 2022-23.

## Operational Learning, Training and Development

Oxfordshire FRS places great importance on operational staff being highly skilled and knowledgeable, enabling them to respond to different types of emergencies at any time. HMICFRS Inspectors were assured to find the Services Training Team regularly updated its understanding of staff's skills and risk-critical safety capabilities. It found that local managers could easily review staff competence to plan training needs through station-based training and exercises.

Our centralised training teams also ensured safety critical areas of operational training continued to be assessed and maintained to national standards through the Covid-19 related restrictions in 2021-22. We were pleased to note that the Services internal teaching standards were praised following an assurance process led by Abingdon and Witney College. The Service was also recognised for the Driver Instructor Team's, national contribution in developing the new Emergency Response Driving Standards.

The Service ensures it maintains an overview of national events and embeds National Operational Guidance and National Operational Learning (NOL) into all aspects of training and development. For example, the Grenfell Tower Inquiry continues to provide important considerations for fire and rescue services across the UK. OFRS collaborate with TVFCS and Thames Valley, Response and Protection Teams to help cascade new learning to prevent tragedies like this re-occurring. All our learning is assured and tested across training, fire safety, fire prevention and Local Resilience Forum functions. The Team has also established a clear action plan to address areas of improvement identified in the 2021/22 HMICFRS inspection report.

## National Operational Guidance

National Operational Guidance provides industry good practice for fire and rescue services within the UK to develop local policies and procedures. OFRS worked through 2021-22 to align our hazard, risk and training information with nationally agreed operational standards. The Service also carried out an assessment of over 1900 incident types using a recognised 'Strategic Gap Analysis' model to assure policies and procedures complied with national best practice. The Services South East, Thames Valley collaborative partnership has led to improvements with incident preparedness and cross border response.

## National Fire Standards

The National Fire Standards are a set of professional expectations for fire and rescue services in England. The standards establish what good practice looks like and are a benchmark that HMICFRS Inspectors use to measure performance against. Embedding the Fire Standards remain a core part of the Services organisational strategy. It is our intention to not only meet the new standards but exceed them. You can read more about the [National Fire Standards](#) by clicking on the highlighted link.

## National and Local Risk Assessments

The National and Local Risk Assessment considers severe weather events, pandemics, and major industrial accidents that could seriously impact on significant parts of the UK. This assessment is considered alongside our own Community Risk Registers to help the Service and Local Resilience Forum (LRF's) plan for major events in our County.

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service supports emergency planning and business continuity from major events through its membership of the Risk Group and by integrating with the LRF and Oxfordshire County Council response strategy. The Service also Chairs the LRF CBRN (Chemical Biological Radioactive and Nuclear) group and engages in regular interoperability training with Category 1 and 2 responders.

## **Technology and Innovation**

OFRS constantly assesses equipment and new technological solutions with neighbouring Services to equip staff with the ability to respond to incidents safely and effectively. The collaborative purchasing of PPE and Breathing Apparatus sets ensured best value for both our firefighters and communities. In 2021/22, the Service introduced fully portable, internet enabled tablets allowing crews to refer vulnerable people for services and access risk information on high-risk premises.

## **Risk Information**

A revised site specific risk information system with improved mapping and supporting data has significantly enhanced crews ability to quickly access safety critical hazard information on all medium and high risk sites. This information is easily available to operational Crews attending incidents through Mobile Data Terminals installed in appliances or through portable devices.

## **Collaborative arrangements**

HMICFRS Inspectors were pleased to discover that the Service met its statutory duties to collaborate and routinely consider opportunities with other emergency responders. The Services approach to joint working was recognised as "good" and aligned with the priorities in the CRMP. Building partnerships across blue light and other Service providers has realised wide area benefits ranging from increased procurement and purchasing efficiencies to standardising emergency response across County borders.

Collaboration in 2021/22 extended to OFRS leading the Council's response to the Afghan repatriation crisis and supporting the South-Central, Ambulance Service with emergency response drivers during the pandemic. Memorandums of understanding (MOUs) for support exist with multiple agencies including the Thames Valley Police, South Central Ambulance Service and the Defence Fire and Rescue Service.

## **Prevent**

The Channel Panel is an early intervention programme chaired by Oxfordshire's, Chief Fire Officer to support people who are at risk of radicalisation. The programme provides practical support tailored to individual needs through helping them make positive choices about their lives. The Prevent scheme utilises a multi-agency safeguarding framework set up between local authorities to collaborate on issues related to reducing radicalisation. The

Panel was found to have delivered against every area following a Home Office assessment in 2021/22.

## Health and Safety

Health and Safety (H&S) continues to underpin all aspects of Oxfordshire FRS work. Our intention is to embed a culture where the safety of staff and public always come first. In 2021/22, the Health, Safety and Welfare Team worked through the pandemic to address significant challenges around cross infection by introducing enhanced PPE, hygiene control and training, high profile signage and hybrid working solutions. By continually reviewing Covid-19 risk assessments and control measures, the H&S Team enabled the Service to return to business as usual, quickly and safely.

The Service also played an important role in supporting the collaborative South East Region H&S Auditing programme to help implement the latest H&S management model of governance. We have also improved the ability of managers to efficiently record, manage and investigate safety related events through an improved digital H&S reporting platform.

## Employee Relations and Resources

In 2021, the Team underwent an Oxfordshire County Council Audit process that identified good practice across many areas. HMICFRS Inspectors also found that support for health and wellbeing was excellent and the Service was working hard to listen to staff. Areas of improvement that were identified, such as those related to new managers understanding of pay were addressed through an improved induction process.

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## Further information

### Legislative frameworks that govern Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Services

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue functions within a clearly defined statutory and policy framework. The key documents setting this out are:

- [The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#)
- [The Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)
- [The Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)
- [The Fire and Rescue Services \(Emergencies\) \(England\) Order 2007](#)
- [The Localism Act 2011](#)
- [The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#)

## Further reading

[The Council Constitution](#)  
[Annual Accounts and Audit](#)