

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service's Statement of Assurance 2024-2025

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 2024-2025. As the Cabinet Member and Chief Fire Officer for Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS), 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 2004, Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, Civil Contingencies Act 2004, The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018 and The Local Government and Housing Act 1989

Cllr Jenny Hannaby, Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing and Safety

Rob MacDougall, Chief Fire Officer and Director of Community Safety

What the Statement of Assurance (SOA) is

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018 sets out the requirement for all fire and rescue authorities to provide annual assurance. It specifies that:

- Every fire and rescue authority must have regard to the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018 in carrying out their functions.
- Every authority must publish an annual statement of assurance of compliance with the Framework.
- The statement of assurance should outline the way in which the fire authority and its fire and rescue service has had regard – in the period covered by the document – to the National Framework, their Community Risk Management Plan and any other strategic plan prepared by the authority for that period.

- The authority must also provide assurance to their community and to government on financial, governance and operational matters.

In 2022 we published our four-year Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). Our CRMP is a strategic document that identifies potential risks within our community and outlines effective strategies to manage and mitigate these risks. It is a crucial tool for any fire and rescue service, as it allows us to proactively address the unique challenges faced by our communities in Oxfordshire.

Our approach is proactive and focused on preventative activities. We believe that prevention is better than cure, and our strategies are designed to prevent incidents before they occur. This involves educating the public, conducting regular risk visits, and implementing effective risk management strategies.

Through our CRMP and annual plans, we aim to create a safer and thriving Oxfordshire. We are committed to protecting our communities and ensuring their prosperity, and our CRMP is a testament to this commitment. By identifying and managing risks, we can ensure the safety and well-being of all residents in Oxfordshire.

In addition, the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018 states that the priorities for Fire and Rescue Authorities is to:

- Make appropriate provision for fire prevention and protection activities and response to fire and rescue related incidents;
- Identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face;
- Collaborate with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the service they provide;
- Be accountable to communities for the service they provide; and
- Develop and maintain a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse

Our Statement of Assurance will also assure that we have focused and met these priorities as required by the Framework.

As well as our SOA, the service also produces a separate Annual Report for 24/25 detailing performance in all areas of service delivery across Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) Community Safety Services. You can read a copy of the Annual Report 2024/2025 [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 activities. The Chief Fire Officer and the Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing 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.

In February 2025, the government asked councils in Oxfordshire to submit an interim proposal(s) for local government reorganisation by 21 March 2025, with a full proposal by 28 November 2025. Three options for unitary councils have been developed, with each option having due regard for OFRS and how the service will operate post reorganisation and devolution. OFRS is working closely with OCC and District Councils to ensure OFRS and the service the public expect from its Fire & Rescue Service is fully considered through the process and when the new model is established.

Further information can be found in our Annual Governance Statement, which is included in our Statement of Accounts publication [here](#), and further information on local government reorganisation and devolution can be found [here](#).

Identify and Assess

Our overarching risk identification and assessment process for Oxfordshire has seen a review and change in approach over the last year in order to ensure we are identifying all foreseeable risk in our communities. Now known as our Oxfordshire Needs and Risk Analysis (ONRA), it serves the purpose of:

- Acting as our “risk assessment” of the County from a Fire and Rescue perspective
- Allowing us to look at the various hazards that are present in the County and assess the risks our communities and service face from these hazards
- Helping guide our plan as a service in everything that we do and how we respond through our Community Risk Management Plan. The plan is framed by our statutory duties under the legislation named in this Statement of Assurance

We follow nationally produced processes and guidance when producing our ONRA and CRMP, including the NFCC Community Risk Management Planning Strategic Framework and Fire Standard’s Board Community Risk Management Planning Standard. By following these we are able to assess risk holistically and target our prevention, protection and response work through our CRMP.

Over 2025, our ONRA process explored these risks in detail taking a significant amount of data, information and feedback from across the service. Some of the key risks identified that will be informing our work now and as we start to prepare for our next CRMP are:

- Staff Mental Health, Physical Health, Wellbeing and Competency

- Ensuring appropriate responses to the wide range of incidents we respond to
- Emergence of new risks or evolving risks such as flooding, adverse weather and Lithium Ion Battery use
- Public Physical and Mental Health & Social Economic Deprivation and the impact this has on the service

Operational – Overview

The way in which we carry out our prevention, protection and response activities is based on our CRMP. This CRMP was published in 2022 and is our 4 year plan based on our Strategic Risk Analysis process that identified what risks exist in Oxfordshire that we are required to act upon through various statutory obligations, legislation, and regulations. This has now been updated through our ONRA process.

Our ONRA and CRMP are not static documents but living processes that evolve with the changing needs and developments within our communities and the fire sector. To ensure their continued relevance and effectiveness, we produce our service delivery annual plan that incorporates our ONRA findings and CRMP objectives which then defines the annual strategies for each service area of our organisation. These annual plans consider the latest developments in Oxfordshire and the fire sector so we can integrate them into our overall strategy.

Operational - Prevention Activity

Our prevention strategy is based around continuing to see a reduction in fires, road traffic collisions and other emergencies attended by OFRS through proactive, targeted prevention work across the county. This includes delivering educational programmes, providing advice and supporting visitors, residents and businesses to prevent incidents occurring. This year, we have been carrying out the following activity in line with our prevention strategy in our CRMP:

Prevention Activity Area	What We Have Done
Conduct a review of OFRS' Prevention Strategy to ensure that we continue to offer effective and efficient prevention services to our communities.	A significant amount of work has been undertaken in relation to ensuring that the Service's prevention activities are efficient and effective. This includes a review of our Home and Community Safety policy, refresh of the Safe and Well app and associated training of crews, work to improve the quality of safeguarding referrals sent to the service and work to target Safe and Well visits to those presenting a possible higher risk. As a result of our work with an emergency services planning organisation (ORH) we are now exploring a future area of work with ORH on both improving our assessment of community risk and the

	evaluation of our prevention activities. This work is continuing at present.
Further develop our Wholetime watch based staff to confidently and competently complete increased Prevention activity to support public and firefighter safety.	New performance measures have been put in place for Prevention work to better enable performance management in the areas. The Safe and Well competency project is being rolled out with training to crews.
Carry out targeted, proactive prevention activities in our communities.	We have visited over 2,300 vulnerable households providing safe and well advice, referred 208 residents on to partner agencies, helping more vulnerable residents receive the support they need from the right agency. Additionally, our community safety van has been deployed 27 times to various locations, providing safety messages and support to the community and we have promoted 631 safety messages to the public.
Collaboration with partners to ensure we target the right people with the right prevention activities.	Worked with Active Oxfordshire and the cycling and walking activation programme within OCC to deliver bike libraries to disadvantaged communities. We also partnered with the University of Oxford and Thames Valley Police to hold a Vision Zero safety event focusing on 'Be Bright Be Seen', which aims to educate cyclists who put themselves and others at risk when riding without lights. Additionally, we conducted road traffic collision demonstrations for the Ministry of Defence's drink driving campaign, showcasing extrication techniques. This includes a presentation on the 'Fatal 4' which highlights the dangers of drink and drug driving.

Operational - Protection Activity

Our team remains committed to the comprehensive delivery of protection services throughout Oxfordshire, leveraging both technology and direct engagement to ensure adherence to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Our efforts have been instrumental in maintaining compliance among commercial entities, with a focus on diminishing the risk of fire in non-residential buildings through a calculated, risk-based approach to business interaction and inspection. This year, we have refined our Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) to further prioritise the inspection of high-risk commercial properties, enhancing our community service effectiveness.

In instances where individuals have neglected their legal duties, thereby endangering lives, we have not hesitated to initiate legal proceedings when it serves the public interest. This past year has seen us undertake prosecutions within our area of responsibility.

Fulfilling our role as a statutory consultee under Building Regulations, we have diligently ensured that new or modified buildings meet fire safety standards, with 694 formal fire safety and building regulation consultations conducted this year. In alignment with our protection strategy outlined in our CRMP, we have engaged in the following activities:

Protection Activity Area	What We Have Done
Continue to increase the number of audits undertaken via our Risk Based Inspection Program and 'themed' activity to address high-risk premises-types.	Proactively completed 491 audits (an increase of 42 from last year), of which 211 (43 per cent) were unsatisfactory. The audits address fire safety concerns, providing improvement measures to those that are unsatisfactory and improve overall safety standards.
To implement and evaluate changes to Unwanted Fire Signals procedures.	Following on from the consultation exercise on this subject, the agreed policy went live on the 10 th October 2024. Significant work took place with partners across the Thames Valley to ensure as much consistency as possible and to support Thames Valley Fire Control Service. In addition, a significant engagement programme was put in place to advise and support businesses during this change. Evaluation is being undertaken but initial indications show that the expected outcomes are being achieved with no concerns of note
Implement a revised building regulatory inspection programme to incorporate new national best practice.	OFRS' Protection team continue to meet the requirements of the current risk-based inspection programme with no outstanding visits. We continue to await the publication of the new national guidance from NFCC, and are ready to implement once received
Gather and update risk information to keep our firefighters and the public safe	We completed 165 fire risk audit workbooks which collect and disseminate operational risk information to prevent injury, ill health, or death of emergency responders and the public, as well as to limit damage to property, infrastructure, and the environment. Additionally, we completed 71 Site Specific Risk Information (SSRI) processes - a detailed

	assessment and documentation of risks associated with specific sites or premises.
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Operational - Response Activity

Since 2023, we have been evaluating how we can adapt to changes in risk across Oxfordshire by beginning a comprehensive review of our response functions. The review process analysed the effectiveness, efficiency and resilience of the service whilst also look at ways of reducing our environmental impact. This resulted in recommendations for improvements across six areas of our response activity.

Five of these recommended changes have been implemented as they relate to specific, internal improvements. The final change – a new operational response model – is currently in the final stages of development. Once complete, public consultation will take place in relation to this new operational response model, which aims to improve response times and resilience of the service for the community of Oxfordshire.

In addition, this year our plan was to work on other specific areas within response which align with our ONRA and CRMP:

Response Activity Area	What We Have Done
New Fire Appliances being rolled out across the county	Six new fire appliances are being introduced across the county, equipped with updated technology and systems designed to enhance safety for both the public and crews during incidents. One of the features of these new vehicles is the incorporation of "clean cab" principles, intended to support crew health and safety.
Improve the operational availability of our fire appliances, through recruitment and retention of operational staff, ensuring we provide an effective and timely emergency response.	An On-call availability strategy has been drafted, looking at ways of reversing the drop in availability and creation of a strategic approach to station-area availability management. The interim availability model was released in April 2025 and is currently being monitored for effectiveness.
Shared Evacuation Tracker implemented across Oxfordshire FRS, Royal Berkshire FRS and Buckinghamshire FRS to enhance tall building fire response	An electronic system for tracking evacuations and fire incidents in tall buildings was designed and implemented internally between all three Thames Valley FRS. In addition, Oxfordshire FRS has implemented additional bespoke pre-conceived trackers for all individual tall buildings within the County to improve our response capability even further.

Introduction of new Command Support Boards	Our new Command Support Boards help us develop and communicate a command structure at dynamic operational incidents. These new boards were developed in partnership with Royal Berkshire and Buckinghamshire FRS' and are aligned to other services in the Southeast region. These command support boards represent a huge step towards aligning our operational response with our Thames Valley partners.
Introduction of the new Operational Learning Tracking System (Volts)	The introduction Volts has improved the way operational learning is captured and implemented. The system allows for the recording and analysis of operational incidents, training exercises, and other relevant activities, ensuring that valuable insights are systematically incorporated into practice. This has help develop our response capabilities, enhance crew safety, and better serve the community.

Collaborative Arrangements

Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) which officially opened in 2015 and bought together the three control rooms from the fire and rescue services within Thames Valley, continues to handle and manage the mobilisation of resources to incidents In Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire areas, demonstrating the benefits and positive outcome of collaborative arrangements.

The Thames Valley collaboration board continues to explore further areas in which the three Thames Valley FRSs can work together to achieve positive outcomes for its residents. This has included work such as the Thames Valley Breathing Apparatus Alignment as well as other areas such as production of joint policies and operating procedures so fire crews can work more closely together across the three counties. This has included work on implementing National Operational Guidance from the NFCC into all services' policies and procedures across the 3 counties to ensure standardisation and interoperability in our response work.

Memorandums of understanding (MOUs) for support exist with agencies such as Thames Valley Police, South Central Ambulance Service and the Defence Fire and Rescue Service, alongside MOUs with the voluntary sector including The British Red Cross and Oxfordshire Lowland Rescue. We have successfully worked alongside the broad spectrum of organisations throughout the year, including the wider Oxfordshire County Council, other blue light responders, partner agencies, utilities and services and the voluntary sector in order to provide a more holistic approach to our prevention, protection and response activities.

National Resilience

The National Resilience programme was established as part of the UK response to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York on 11 September 2001 and is a shared responsibility between central and local government. National Resilience provides specialist capabilities, personnel and resources which enhance the ability of the sector to respond effectively to large-scale or critical incidents. Those incidents may be natural disasters, industrial accidents or terrorist attacks.

OFRS is responsible for two national resilience functions for a large geographical area. These are:

- Detection, Identification and Monitoring - specialist teams that provide the Fire and Rescue Service with the ability to make an assessment on the potential presence of chemical, biological and radiological agents
- High Volume Pumping capability - Used to move significant volumes of water over long distances, either in response to floods, or to provide a water supply to fight fires in locations where large amounts are required.

Our staff train and exercises on national assets through the year to ensure their efficient and effective deployment and use of equipment when requested. Over the last year, we have deployed these national assets 6 times within Oxfordshire and 15 times nationally, demonstrating our dedication and commitment to protecting the wider population and our responsibilities as a National Resilience asset holder.

Terrorism

Chaired by OFRS's Deputy Chief Fire Officer, the Channel Panel is an early intervention scheme that supports people who are at risk of radicalisation and provides practical support tailored to individual needs. It can help people to make positive choices about their lives. It is about safeguarding individuals vulnerable to radicalisation by using existing multi-agency working between local authorities to identify individuals at risk of being drawn into terrorism, assess the nature and extent of that risk, develop the most appropriate support plan for the individual concerned, with a clear process in place to ensure that the right people are referred to the panel.

In addition, the findings and recommendations from the Manchester Arena Inquiry have been reviewed in detail and actioned by the service, and we are working on continuing to ensure that OFRS is able to respond to terrorist incidents through development of policy and procedures with the Thames Valley alignment group. We currently have a dedicated operational response team shared across the Thames Valley who are trained and equipped to respond to terrorism incidents, and we are currently rolling out training packages to the rest of our operational firefighters and officers to ensure they are able to safely and efficiently respond to terrorism incidents to support these teams and other Category 1 responders.

People and Wellbeing

As part of our people strategy, we have continued to work to ensure a positive culture as an organisation over the last year. In order to achieve this, we

commissioned an independent cultural review by Stephanie Wheeler Associates in 2023 across a range of topics, and we have continued to work with Stephanie and the wider service to implement a number of improvements and strategies over the last year, including:

People Activity Area	What We Have Done
Develop our Mental Health and Wellbeing plans by reviewing our work in this area and driving continuous improvement in this area.	The Health, Safety and Wellbeing department has run two Real Talk, Real People sessions this year which have been a big success with staff. Additionally, the team are visiting all On Call stations during drill nights to update them on all wellbeing access.
Capture learning and understanding from the 2024 HMICFRS Inspection, including reviewing and implementing improvements in areas identified.	The HMICFRS Inspection action plan is in place with Heads of Service providing monthly updates and tracking of progress. This has resulted in a number of areas for improvement being completed with work continuing on others.
Continue to lead the Clean Working Principles work for the service	Some of the outputs from our work in this area has resulted in the procurement of “clean cab” fire appliances and purchase of BA washers to help keep our crews cleaner, safer and healthier.
Continue to grow and develop our staff	We trained 33 new firefighters and 11 new incident commanders, whilst also recruiting 32 on-call staff, and 16 wholetime firefighters over the last year.
Undertook a review of the Employee Relations and Resourcing Team (ERRT) function following staff feedback in the culture review citing capacity issues in some key areas	We have reviewed the roles and responsibilities required across our middle manager roles in ERRT and Development. This resulted in us making changes to the roles and responsibilities for 3 middle managers with the aim of reducing capacity issues and allowing for business to be managed effectively when resource demand is high for some of our core deliverables such as recruitment or staff consultation projects.
Improving promotional processes.	We have introduced more independence into our interview panels by inviting colleagues from other fire and rescue services to form part of our panels. This has meant that we can increase diversity of our interview panels and better reflect the candidates. It has also resulted in sharing best practice ideas and assuring ourselves of objectivity and independence, helping to select the right candidates for the roles.
Improved development programmes at all levels of the Service	All of our development programmes have been reviewed which includes the reduction of input required by candidates as we have removed duplication and cross mapped various requirements. This supports our strategy for aligning all career pathway options to mirror the NFCC Leadership Framework of Leading Yourself, Leading the Team, Leading the Function and Leading the Service. One of the initial benefits is reducing

	workload required of those who are promoted into new roles with less work to undertake in development.
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National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC)

The NFCC is the professional voice of the UK fire and rescue service and aims to drive improvement and development throughout the UK Fire and Rescue Sector. OFRS has a proud history of engagement with the NFCC, and we are represented on a number of NFCC working groups covering a broad range of topics across the sector. Our Chief Fire Officer and Director of Community Safety Rob MacDougal serves as Chair of the NFCC People Programme, which sees him leading a team that is defining the next People Strategy, providing a direction of travel for the sector over the next few years. OFRS have also worked with the NFCC over the last year on the Direct Entry Station Manager programme, and continue to implement NFCC devised guidance's and processes, such as the NFCC Community Risk Management Planning Strategic Framework for our Oxfordshire Needs and Risk Analysis process, demonstrating commitment to NFCC best practices and projects.

HMICFRS Inspection

In 2024, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspected OFRS, with their report published in July 2024. Their report highlighted several positive aspects as well as some areas for improvement. It highlighted that the service has:

- Improved the availability of risk information for control room staff
- Maintained a well-qualified protection team
- An effective prevention strategy that is focused on those most at risk
- Collaborated effectively with other organisations to enhance community safety
- Sound financial management, with strategic plans to improve efficiency and sustainability.

However, the inspection also identified several areas needing improvement. There are some delays in updating risk information on mobile data terminals, which hampers effective risk mitigation. The service struggles with the availability of on-call fire appliances (which is recognised as a nationwide issue) and has not met its response time targets in certain areas. Staff workloads, particularly in the prevention team and at middle management level are high, and there is a high number of temporary promotions and movements that can cause instability. The service could do more to enhance its approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion, and there is a need for clearer communication and better support for staff during the ongoing change programme.

Overall while OFRS has shown strengths in several areas, we also face challenges. Addressing these issues will be crucial for us to improve our effectiveness and efficiency whilst keeping the community safe. The ongoing improvements and development within the service, led by our Community Safety Services review, are key steps in the right direction, but we must ensure we continue this work in the most effective way with clear communication at our core.

Upon publication of the report, OFRS immediately began developing a robust action plan to address the areas identified as requiring improvement. We have made progress in some areas already, such as launching our updated Automatic Fire Alarm Response Policy, however some areas will require more time to refine and implement to ensure the best outcomes. Currently out of the 26 identified areas for improvement, we have 8 considered addressed and closed by the service, with 13 currently in progress and on target.

We will continue to work with HMICFRS to ensure our actions provide the results needed to address the areas for improvement whilst also continuing to deliver and drive our positive work in the areas identified.

More detail on assessments of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue service can be found on the [HMICFRS website](#).

Finance

Our budget for 2024-2025:

- The total net expenditure for Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service was £32.1m
- The cost of providing the fire and rescue service in 2024/25 was approximately 12p per day for each person within Oxfordshire and the cost per head of population was £42.84 per year.
- Our overall expenditure against the number of incidents we attend is £5310.48 per incident in 2024-25.

Financial data is taken from the CIPFA Fire and Rescue Statistics Auditors' findings. 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 auditors' reports and findings can be found in the annual audit letter for 2024-2025. The accounts and audit regulations require local authorities, including fire and rescue authorities, to prepare an annual governance statement in support of the annual statement of accounts. Full details can be found in the annual governance statement, which is included in our statement of accounts.

Further information

A PDF version of this report can be downloaded from: [HERE](#)

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](#)
- [Local Government and Housing Act 1989](#)

Further reading

- [Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service Performance](#)
- [The Council Constitution](#)
- [Annual Accounts and Audit](#)