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Notice of a Meeting

Safer & Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee
Monday, 12 November 2012 at 10.00 am
County Hall, Oxford, OX1 1ND

Membership

Chairman - Councillor Lawrie Stratford
Deputy Chairman - Councillor Stewart Lilly

Councillors:	John Goddard	Susanna Pressel	Alan Thompson
	Anthony Gearing	Bill Service	Carol Viney
	Patrick Greene	Chip Sherwood	

Notes:

Date of next meeting: 10 January 2013

What does this Committee review or scrutinise?

- Community safety; anti-social behaviour; crime and the fear of crime; fire and rescue; consumer protection; emergency planning; police issues; coroner's service; gypsies and travellers; drugs and alcohol awareness; road safety (police, trading standards, fire and rescue); libraries; museums and heritage; the arts; archives; leisure and recreation; registration service; community cohesion; voluntary and community sector.
- The functions of the responsible authorities (local authorities, fire and rescue authorities, police authorities, the police, primary care trusts and the Probation Service) which comprise a Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership/Community Safety Partnership.
- Those regulatory functions of the Planning & Regulation Committee not falling within the remit of the Growth & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee.

How can I have my say?
We welcome the views of the community on any issues in relation to the responsibilities of this Committee. Members of the public may ask to speak on any item on the agenda or may suggest matters which they would like the Committee to look at. **Requests to speak must be submitted to the Committee Officer below no later than 9 am on the working day before the date of the meeting.**

For more information about this Committee please contact:

Chairman	-	Councillor Lawrie Stratford
		E.Mail: lawrie.stratford@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Committee Officer	-	*Claire Phillips, Tel: (01865) 323967*
		claire.phillips@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Peter G. Clark
County Solicitor

November 2012

About the County Council

The Oxfordshire County Council is made up of 74 councillors who are democratically elected every four years. The Council provides a range of services to Oxfordshire's 630,000 residents. These include:

schools	social & health care	libraries and museums
the fire service	roads	trading standards
land use	transport planning	waste management

Each year the Council manages £0.9 billion of public money in providing these services. Most decisions are taken by a Cabinet of 9 Councillors, which makes decisions about service priorities and spending. Some decisions will now be delegated to individual members of the Cabinet.

About Scrutiny

Scrutiny is about:
- Providing a challenge to the Cabinet
- Examining how well the Cabinet and the Authority are performing
- Influencing the Cabinet on decisions that affect local people
- Helping the Cabinet to develop Council policies
- Representing the community in Council decision making
- Promoting joined up working across the authority's work and with partners

Scrutiny is NOT about:
- Making day to day service decisions
- Investigating individual complaints.

What does this Committee do?

The Committee meets up to 6 times a year or more. It develops a work programme, which lists the issues it plans to investigate. These investigations can include whole committee investigations undertaken during the meeting, or reviews by a panel of members doing research and talking to lots of people outside of the meeting. Once an investigation is completed the Committee provides its advice to the Cabinet, the full Council or other scrutiny committees. Meetings are open to the public and all reports are available to the public unless exempt or confidential, when the items would be considered in closed session

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If you have any special requirements (such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities) please contact the officer named on the front page, giving as much notice as possible before the meeting

A hearing loop is available at County Hall.

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recycled paper

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments**

2. **Declarations of Interest - see guidance note on the back page**

3. **Minutes** (Pages 1 - 6)

   To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 3 September **(SSC3)** and to note for information any matters arising from them.

4. **Speaking to or petitioning the Committee**

   SCRUTINY MATTERS

5. **Director's Update**

   10.10

   The Head of Law and Culture, Peter Clark, will give a verbal update on key issues affecting Registration, Coroner's Services and Cultural Services.

   The Chief Fire Officer, Dave Etheridge will update the committee on key issues for the Fire & Rescue and Community Safety including the election of the new Police & Crime Commissioner and current performance.

6. **Draft OFRS Strategic Integrated Risk Management Plan 2013/18 for Public Consultation** (Pages 7 - 58)

   10.30

   Report **(SSC6a)** by Assistant Chief Fire Officer on the Fire and Rescue Authority's next draft five-year Strategic Integrated Risk Management Action Plan (IRMP) **(SSC6b),** also known as its Community Risk Management Plan, based on the analysis of both the current and anticipated future fire and rescue-related risks facing Oxfordshire.

   This strategic IRMP will form the evidential basis for future annual action plans over the next five-year period, providing the Fire and Rescue Authority with the flexibility to manage the foreseeable risks within the wider context of the County Council's priorities and pressures.

The report also provides an update on the Government's new Fire and Rescue National Framework (2012) - which sets national expectations - has an impact on the direction of the Authority's Strategic IRMP - and the first IRMP action plan (2013-14) to be associated with this strategic document is the subject of a separate delegated decision paper.

The Scrutiny Committee is asked whether it supports the strategic risk profiling methodology as set out within the 5-year IRMP – as well as the resulting risk analysis and future options for managing the risk.

The Committee is asked to support full public consultation on the proposals.

7. Integrated Risk Management Plan - Draft Action Plan 2013/14 and Update on National Framework (Pages 59 - 62)

10.50

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer will present a report **(SSC7)** on a number of projects to be included within the Fire Authority's Integrated Risk Management Action Plan (IRMP) for the fiscal year 2013-14, based on the analysis contained within its latest strategic IRMP (2013-18).

The proposals summarise areas where the Service's Senior Leadership Team believe service improvements may be achieved. To meet the requirements of the IRMP process, each proposal is supported by evidence, validating both their inclusion and their contribution to improved community engagement and community/firefighter safety. Similarly, each proposal recognises the prevailing economic constraints.

The Scrutiny Committee is asked to endorse the project options highlighted in the 2013-2014 IRMP Action Plan and support full public consultation on the proposals.

8. OFRS Response Standards Annual Report (Pages 63 - 70)

11.15

Report **(SSC8)** on the Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service performance against our agreed local Response Standards for attending emergency incidents in the county. Cabinet approved these standards on 22 June 2006.

The report will be presented by Nigel Wilson, Operations & Resilience Manager.

9. Update on the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act Policy (Pages 71 - 82)

11.35

The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) sets out a regulatory framework for the use of covert investigatory techniques by public authorities. RIPA does not provide any powers to carry out covert activities. If such activities are

conducted by council officers, then RIPA regulates them in a manner that is compatible with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), particularly Article 8, the right to respect for private and family life.

The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 introduces two important amendments to RIPA. These amendments take effect from 1st November 2012. Firstly, a local authority can only authorise directed surveillance under RIPA where the authority is investigating particular types of offences. Secondly, internal authorisations granted under RIPA will not take effect until approved by a Magistrate.

This paper **(SSC9a)** provides an overview of these changes and their likely impact on the functions of the Council. The authority's revised RIPA policy is included with the report for the committee to review and comment on **(SSC9b)**.

The Acting Head of Trading Standards and Community Safety, Richard Webb will present the report.

10. The Citizen's Consumer Service (Pages 83 - 86)

11.55

The Acting Head of Trading Standards and Community Safety, Richard Webb will present a report **(SSC10)** with an overview of the performance of the Citizens Advice Consumer Service and a summary of Oxfordshire Trading Standards monitoring of this service.

In April 2012 Citizens Advice assumed responsibility for the provision of the national consumer advice service formerly known as Consumer Direct. At the same time, Oxfordshire Trading Standards Service ceased providing first-tier consumer advice and referred anyone seeking consumer advice to this national service.

In the first 6 months of operation Citizens Advice have established the new national service, now called the Citizens Advice Consumer Service and have developed new working arrangements with local Trading Standards Services. As the national service provides the portal for consumer cases to be referred to Oxfordshire Trading Standards, so that additional help can be provided to the consumer and to ensure that unfair or illegal business practices can be stopped, it is important that we ensure these new arrangements work well. It is also important that we maintain an awareness of the quality of service being provided to Oxfordshire residents.

11. Forward Plan

12.10

The Committee is asked to suggest items from the current Forward Plan on which is may wish to have an opportunity to offer advice to Cabinet before any decision is taken. The current Forward Plan can be found on the Council's website http://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/mgListPlanItems.aspx?PlanId=156&RP=115

12. Close of Meeting

12.20

Declarations of Interest

The duty to declare…..
Under the Localism Act 2011 it is a criminal offence to
(a) fail to register a disclosable pecuniary interest within 28 days of election or co-option (or re-election or re-appointment), or
(b) provide false or misleading information on registration, or
(c) participate in discussion or voting in a meeting on a matter in which the member or co-opted member has a disclosable pecuniary interest.

Whose Interests must be included?
The Act provides that the interests which must be notified are those of a member or co-opted member of the authority, **or**
- those of a spouse or civil partner of the member or co-opted member;
- those of a person with whom the member or co-opted member is living as husband/wife
- those of a person with whom the member or co-opted member is living as if they were civil partners.

(in each case where the member or co-opted member is aware that the other person has the interest).

What if I remember that I have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest during the Meeting?.
The Code requires that, at a meeting, where a member or co-opted member has a disclosable interest (of which they are aware) in any matter being considered, they disclose that interest to the meeting. The Council will continue to include an appropriate item on agendas for all meetings, to facilitate this.

Although not explicitly required by the legislation or by the code, it is recommended that in the interests of transparency and for the benefit of all in attendance at the meeting (including members of the public) the nature as well as the existence of the interest is disclosed.

A member or co-opted member who has disclosed a pecuniary interest at a meeting must not participate (or participate further) in any discussion of the matter; and must not participate in any vote or further vote taken; and must withdraw from the room.

Members are asked to continue to pay regard to the following provisions in the code that *“You must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself”* or *“You must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned…..”.*

Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer prior to the meeting should you have any doubt about your approach.

List of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests:
Employment (includes*“any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain”*.), **Sponsorship, Contracts, Land, Licences, Corporate Tenancies, Securities.**

For a full list of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and further Guidance on this matter please see the Guide to the New Code of Conduct and Register of Interests at Members' conduct guidelines. http://intranet.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wps/wcm/connect/occ/Insite/Elected+members/ or contact Rachel Dunn on (01865) 815279 or Rachel.dunn@oxfordshire.gov.uk for a hard copy of the document.

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SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Monday, 3 September 2012 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.30 pm

Present:

Voting Members:	Councillor Stewart Lilly (Deputy Chairman) – in the Chair
	Councillor John Goddard
	Councillor Anthony Gearing
	Councillor Ray Jelf (In place of Councillor Patrick Greene)
	Councillor Susanna Pressel
	Councillor Bill Service
	Councillor Alan Thompson
	Councillor Carol Viney
	Councillor Michael Gibbard (In place of Councillor Lawrie Stratford)
Other Members in Attendance:	Councillor Judith Heathcoat

Officers:

Whole of meeting	Kathrin Luddecke
Part of meeting	Caroline Parker
Agenda Item	**Officer Attending**
5	Peter Clark
6	Peter Clark, Jacquie Bugeja, Karen Warren
7	David Etheridge
8	David Etheridge, Nathan Travis, Stewart Garner
9, 10	Richard Webb, Kate Davies, Gill Tishler (CAB)

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports are attached to the signed Minutes.

43/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS
(Agenda No. 1)

The chairman, Cllr Lawrie Stratford, had given his apologies and the deputy chairman, Cllr Stewart Lilly, chaired the meeting. Councillor Michael Gibbard substituted for Councillor Stratford and Councillor Ray Jelf substituted for Councillor Patrick Greene. Councillor Chip Sherwood was absent.

The chairman introduced Caroline Parker, Projects and Programmes Manager, who will be taking on the role of Committee Officer from Kathrin Luddecke from the following week. Councillor Lilly, on behalf of all the committee, recorded its gratitude and wished Kathrin Luddecke well for her secondment.

44/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE BACK PAGE
(Agenda No. 2)

None.

45/12 MINUTES
(Agenda No. 3)

The minutes of the meetings held on 18 June **(SSC3)** were approved as a correct record, subject to amending the number of fire fighters mentioned under item 34/12 (p.3) from three to four, and signed by the chairman.

Matters arising from the meeting of 18 June:

- Item 39/12: Councillor Pressel requested updated figures on cycling accidents from Road Safety; in response to a query from Councillor Goddard it was **agreed** for a Road Safety update to be added to the committee's work programme.

46/12 SPEAKING TO OR PETITIONING THE COMMITTEE
(Agenda No. 4)

Dr Judith Wardle (Save Oxfordshire Libraries) had requested to address the committee. She expressed serious concerns about the section of the report on item 6 **(SSC6)** relating to expanding the use of volunteers in the library service. She referred to concerns about the outstanding appointment of the Community Library Co-ordinator, pilots for new staffing arrangements, compacts between the service and communities, parish councils making financial contributions, staff morale and extended temporary contracts during service re-organisation.

In response to a request for clarification by Councillor Pressel, Dr Wardle stated Save Oxfordshire Libraries was in contact with 19 library groups as well as core libraries.

47/12 DIRECTOR'S UPDATE
(Agenda No. 5)

The Head of Law and Governance, Peter Clark, gave a verbal update with a written note provided as requested previously. The update included, amongst other items:

- The appointment of Judge Peter Thornton as Chief Coroner and Peter Clark's thanks to the staff of the Coroner's Office for their work, in particular on the 43 military repatriations to date, 22 of which are being retained in the county
- A number of externally funded projects undertaken by the Museums, History and Archives services and support to local museums such as the Museum of Oxford and Abingdon Museum.

Councillor Pressel, who sits on the Museum Council, commended the role of the Museum Service that Carol Anderson and her team had played in establishing the wonderful new galleries of the Museum of Oxford at the Town Hall.

48/12   LIBRARIES STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION - UPDATE
(Agenda No. 6)

Karen Warren, Cultural Services Manager, gave a presentation updating the committee on the implementation of the Libraries Strategy on behalf of Jillian Southwell, Library Service Manager. Issues covered included:

- The successful Summer Reading Challenge in July, targeting adults as well as young people, delivered shortly after the senior management restructure which took effect in May – noting that over 50 volunteers had come forward, including young people between 14 and 19 years of age
- Opportunities to improve facilities to have a service fit for the 21st century, including self-service, payment by debit/credit cards and digital services which offered e-books as part of the core service
- Collaboration with other council services and leadership on projects, for example supporting council priorities such as skills and employment, educational attainment, health and wellbeing.

Karen Warren also responded to particular concerns raised by Dr Wardle in her address to the committee, including the following points:

- The development of Community and Community Plus libraries is a three year process which began in April this year and is therefore at an early stage but anticipated to progress apace
- Progress is being made with developing the role and training of volunteers and agreements with communities, with individual discussions to reflect local needs
- The post of Community Library Co-ordinator is being re-advertised externally following the decision of previous interview panels, involving representatives of Library Friends Groups, not to proceed to an appointment
- The professional behaviour of library staff throughout a period of change and the priority given by senior managers to continuing to support them, as well as the logistics of the restructure now starting with appointments to core library posts.

Councillor Heathcoat, the Cabinet Member for Cultural Services, highlighted sections of the report **(SSC6)** of particular interest to the committee. She referred to having kept elected members informed about progress, as she had undertaken to do, noting that she had not received any replies or comments from members. She thanked Karen and her staff for their hard work.

Karen Warren responded to a range of questions from members including noting a project management approach to the changes, being on track for milestones and financial savings, very positive meetings with Library Friends Groups over the last six months, learning from a visit to Hillingdon Council, publicity for the launch of the e-books facility and ability to access the internet from our libraries.

49/12 DIRECTOR'S UPDATE - FIRE & RESCUE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY
(Agenda No. 7)

David Etheridge, Chief Fire Officer and Head of Community Safety, updated the committee about key issues, including:

- The Joint Fire Control project with Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue a project agreed by Cabinet progresses and both the Cabinet Member, Cllr Heathcoat, and the Chairman of this Scrutiny Cllr Stratford attend and sit on the Programmer Sponsoring Group to ensure they are actively involved and informed of progress
- Thanks to staff in relation to the Olympics, in particular those who volunteered their time, and Thames Valley Police noting Assistant Chief Constable John Campbell who had shown exemplary command skills
- The appointment of Simon Furlong as Assistant Chief Fire Officer, who brought valuable experience of 22 years' service in West Sussex, replacing Nathan Travis who is himself taking on the role of Deputy Chief Fire Officer

David Etheridge expressed his personal thanks to Colin Thomas, the retiring Deputy Chief Fire Officer, who was present at the meeting. He referred to his professional attitude, attention to detail, loyalty and outstanding and unstinting support given to the council and public of Oxfordshire over 21 years of service. This was echoed by the Chairman, Councillor Lilly, who had been asked by all councillors to thank Colin Thomas for his dedication and excellent service to the people of Oxfordshire over many years. Councillor Viney and the portfolio holder, Councillor Heathcoat, also paid tribute to his work and expressed their gratitude.

The Chief Fire Officer responded to questions from members of the committee, in particular relating to staff and union involvement in the Fire Control project. He acknowledged the importance of this area of work as well as the technical and operational side of the project, noting that implementation of the new arrangements was due in April 2014. In response to concerns expressed by Councillor Pressel, he invited her to meet directly with those concerned. He also confirmed that the Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue service, while working on a joint solution with Cambridgeshire, were aware of progress and would be welcome to re-join the Thames Valley project.

50/12 OXFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE - INTEGRATED CORPORATE RISK REDUCTION STRATEGY
(Agenda No. 8)

Nathan Travis, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, gave an overview of the strategy (**SSC8**), noting that at the half way point of the "365 Alive" campaign started in 2006 targets in all three areas of activity are being exceeded. He pointed out that the Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service is in an excellent position to focus on prevention and protection activities, as part of the county council and working closely with other emergency services.

In response to questions from members of the committee, he confirmed that the service is working closely with district councils and colleagues in public health. He

undertook to respond directly to Councillor Pressel on specific queries. David Etheridge also responded to a query by Councillor Goddard with regard to the location of fire stations and by Councillor Viney about the integrated approach to road safety.

51/12 REVIEW OF PAYDAY LENDING
(Agenda No. 9)

Kate Davies, Trading Standards Team Leader, and Richard Webb, Acting Head of Trading Standards and Community Safety, responded to questions by the committee on the report provided (**SSC9**). Discussion included clarification of what constitutes criminal behaviour with regard to money lending, confirmation of helplines and advice available and the importance of promoting financial literacy.

As a result of the discussions, it was **agreed** for:

- Councillor Bill Service to put a motion to Council concerning the role envisaged by national government for Citizens Advice as to who would fund that service, seconded by Councillors Goddard and Gearing
- Councillor Heathcoat to liaise with Councillors Tilley and Chapman, as Cabinet Members for Education and for Children and the Voluntary Sector respectively, about encouraging schools to promote financial literacy
- The service to circulate updated local information about debt advice in the county and the findings of the Office of Fair Trading's national review once published to the committee.

52/12 CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU CONSUMER EMPOWERMENT PROJECT
(Agenda No. 10)

Kate Davies, Trading Standards Team Leader, introduced Gill Tishler, representing Oxfordshire Citizens Advice Bureaus (CAB), who gave an overview of this pilot project run together with Oxfordshire Trading Standards (**SSC10**). The pilot is taking place as the CAB is preparing to become the publicly funded voice of the consumer under the government's proposals to changing the consumer landscape.

Gill Tishler outlined the three main areas of the project, around the partnership of advice agencies focusing on consumer issues, gathering and sharing information between agencies and awareness raising and campaigning. She also highlighted progress to date and work planned over the coming six months.

It was **agreed** for the project newsletter, current contact list of organisations with interest in the project and information sharing protocols to be shared with the committee. Members are welcome to pass on the newsletter and to suggest any other local organisations that could be involved.

53/12 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME
(Agenda No. 11)

The committee's draft work plan had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting as requested. The chairman confirmed meetings with senior officers to

identify items have taken place and asked members to suggest any additional items. The chairman confirmed that the update on Road Safety would be included within the committee's work programme.

54/12 CLOSE OF MEETING
(Agenda No. 12)

The meeting finished at 12.30pm.

.... in the Chair

Date of signing ....

Division(s): N/A

**SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
12 NOVEMBER 2012**

**DRAFT STRATEGIC INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN
(IRMP) 2013-18 OXFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

Report by the Chief Fire Officer

Introduction

1. This report presents the Fire Authority's next draft five-year Strategic Integrated Risk Management Action Plan (IRMP) - also known as its Community Risk Management Plan - based on the analysis of both the current and anticipated future fire and rescue-related risks facing Oxfordshire.

2. To meet the requirements of the IRMP process, the plan also includes options to further reduce, mitigate and respond to these identified risks - with the overall aim of improving both public and firefighter safety. In addition, the analysis recognises the potential impact of the prevailing economic conditions on both the organisation and its staff.

3. The risks are formulated into five main groupings that demonstrate their relevance to the people and communities of Oxfordshire:

    Risk at home - risks at home from emergency situations and other risks in the community that are not covered elsewhere (such as Leisure).

    Risk at work – risks at work from emergency situations and hazardous processes and materials.

    Risk whilst travelling – risks while travelling by road rail, boats and aircraft.

    Heritage risk – risks to the wealth of places with historical value in Oxfordshire.

    Extreme events – extreme weather, environmental impacts and terrorist activities.

4. This strategic IRMP will then form the evidential basis of future annual action plans over the next five-year period (e.g. the 2013-14 action plan is presented under a separate paper), providing the Fire and Rescue Authority with the flexibility to manage the foreseeable risks within the wider context of the County Council's priorities and pressures.

5. Following scrutiny consideration of the plan there will be followed by a 12-week public and stakeholder consultation process (e.g. neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services and partner organisations such as the Highways Agency and the Environment Agency, the Fire Brigades Union and Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue staff – both uniformed and non-uniformed), before final approval is sought from the Cabinet in February 2013.

6. This Strategic IRMP has been written in line with the direction and requirements of the Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004, Civil Contingencies Act 2004, Regulatory Reform Order (Fire Safety) 2005 and the latest version of the Government's Fire and Rescue Service National Framework (2012).

7. The 2012 Fire and Rescue National Framework requires each Fire and Rescue Authority to produce a publicly available IRMP covering at least a three-year time span which:

   • Is regularly reviewed and revised and reflects up-to-date risk information and evaluation of service delivery outcomes
   • Has regard to the risk analyses completed by Local and Regional Resilience Forums including those reported in external Community Risk Registers (CRRs) and internal risk registers, to ensure that civil and terrorist contingencies are captured in their IRMP
   • Reflects effective consultation during its development and at all review stages with representatives of all sections of the community and stakeholders
   • Demonstrates how prevention, protection and response activities will be best used to mitigate the impact of risk on communities in a cost effective way
   • Provides details of how Fire and Rescue Authorities deliver their objectives and meet the needs of communities through working with partners
   • Has undergone an effective equality impact assessment process.

8. The Senior Management team from Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service will respond to the comments made during the consultation period and the responses will be made available to Cabinet in the final report in 2013 and published on the internet for public access.

Financial and Staff Implications

11. Each project that uses this strategic risk profiling and analysis document will fully recognise the prevailing economic constraints, delivering efficiencies or allowing existing/additional services to be delivered more effectively.

RECOMMENDATION

12. The Scrutiny Committee is asked whether it supports the strategic risk profiling methodology as set out within the 5-year IRMP – as well as the resulting risk analysis and future options for managing the risk.

13. The Committee is also asked to support full public consultation on the proposals.

Dave Etheridge
Chief Fire Officer

Background papers: The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2012.

Contact Officer: Nathan Travis Tel. (01865) 855206

October 2012

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**Oxfordshire County Council
Fire & Rescue Service**

OXFORDSHIRE COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

2013 to 2018

Securing a safer Oxfordshire

Contents

Front Cover and these pages: Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service at Blenheim Palace

Figures

Welcome and foreword

Councillor Judith Heathcoat

When emergencies happen in our everyday lives, such as fires in our homes or road traffic collisions, we expect our Fire and Rescue Service to respond quickly and provide us with a professional and caring service, whatever the time or circumstances. Not only this, we also expect them to come into our homes and where we work and give us practical advice about how we can keep our families and work colleagues safe.

But the world is becoming more and more complex. Our Fire and Rescue Service has a long history of being high performing and low cost, but despite the difficult economic pressure we face as a council, the service is being asked to do more with its limited resources at both a local and national level. For example, fire officers are now taking responsibility locally for road safety for the county council and at a national level we are also working closely with Thames Valley Police and other emergency responders to ensure that they can effectively deal with extreme and large scale events such as wide area flooding or a terrorist attack.

However, we are fortunate to have a Fire and Rescue Service that sees the benefits to our local communities of being part of the wider county council and, as a result, it is proactively seeking out ways of adding value to the other services we deliver to the people of Oxfordshire wherever possible; the safeguarding of vulnerable children and adults being a prime example.

Nevertheless, over the next five years, the pace of change in the county will only increase and that is why Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service needs this Community Risk Management Plan, based on sound research to meet the challenges ahead.

Chief Fire Officer Dave Etheridge

Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service has made significant progress in recent years on keeping people in the county safe in their homes, at work and on our roads. Over halfway through our decade-long 365 Alive campaign we are currently exceeding the targets[1] we set ourselves back in 2006.

But even in those intervening years, the world has become a very different place. Domestic and international terrorism is on the rise. As a service, some of our fire engines and fleet vehicles now contain specialist equipment to ensure that we can rise to any challenge Mother Nature or individuals present to us. For example, our officers are now highly trained in specialist areas and are available to respond all over the UK, if needed, and indeed across Europe. We have also seen the impacts of extreme weather events in recent years, such as the floods in 2007 and the snow in 2010/11 and we are now ready to help keep the county on the move and protect our communities as best we can. We are determined to do more with our staff and equipment to ensure that we can respond quickly to any emergency regardless of its size.

We welcome this wider public value expectation and, as a consequence, we have set ourselves the challenge of becoming the most integrated fire and rescue service in the country; not only helping to deliver on the outcomes and priorities of other county council services, such as adult social care and education, but also sharing key functions – such as a Fire Control Room with Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service – as well as other assets and specialist services with other partners, such as Thames Valley Police. We want to continue our quest to make Oxfordshire safer for those who live, work and travel in the county.

We need to establish this five-year Community Risk Management Plan, not only based on historical evidence and current research but also on predictive trend data, so that we can shape and innovate our future Fire and Rescue Service to best meet the changing needs of our communities.

I am extremely proud to be the Chief Fire Officer of Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service. We have achieved some significant results in recent years including being the first Service in the UK to be awarded with the Customer Service Excellence and winning 'Brigade of the Year' on behalf of The Fire Fighters Charity. I am very fortunate that I command teams who have a very positive "can-do" culture and fully support the organisation's mission to make Oxfordshire safer.

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[1] See page 17

Introduction

What is a Community Risk Management Plan?

This plan is Oxfordshire County Council's Fire and Rescue Service's five year analysis of the county's community risk profile, together with our strategic approach for how we intend to effectively manage those risks over the period. Government requires us, by law, to regularly produce and review the plan, which is also known as our Strategic Integrated Risk management Plan'.

This document looks at the fire and rescue related risks to the safety of the people who live, work, travel and visit Oxfordshire and identifies how we will work with communities, businesses and other partners (such as the police and ambulance services) to:

- PREVENT incidents happening in the first place – for example through information and education about how to reduce the risks of fires and road traffic collisions.

- PROTECT people and property in case incidents do occur – for example through advice to and inspection of businesses and historic buildings.

- RESPOND AND INTERVENE quickly and effectively when incidents do occur – making sure we have well-trained and equipped firefighters available in the right place and at the right time to resolve emergencies and give assistance when required.

It also identifies the key risks and challenges facing Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service as an organisation and considers how we will ensure that we maintain a high quality, effective and value-for-money service in to the future.

As a listening and learning organisation, it has been developed following discussions with a cross-section of the public and our own firefighters, incorporating their priorities, ideas and suggestions.

Who is this plan for?

This plan is aimed at all those with an interest in the safety of Oxfordshire, including :

- Our communities
- Businesses in the county
- Voluntary, community and faith groups
- Firefighters who serve and protect Oxfordshire
- Other emergency service providers, such as the police and ambulance services
- Health and social care professionals
- Trading standards, environmental health and road safety professionals
- Councillors and senior managers of the county, district, town and parish councils

Section 1 - About us

Our county

Oxfordshire is home to around 650,000 people. The population is increasing but it remains a predominantly rural area and is the least densely populated county in the South East of England.

Oxfordshire is a place that people like to live and work in, with a high quality built and natural environment and thriving economy.

The population is healthier and more prosperous than most other areas

87% of residents regard the county as a good place to live (Place Survey 2008/09)

Unemployment is amongst the lowest in the country, with less than 2% of residents claiming job seekers allowance (December 2011)

The most rural county in the South East Region with a high quality built and natural environment

A popular visitor destination renowned for its rural beauty, numerous market towns and the academic and architectural splendour of Oxford city itself

Residents and businesses benefit from the county's position at the heart of the UK rail and road transport network

Oxfordshire comprises 260,595 hectares and spans approximately 50 miles north to south and 35 miles east to west

Our economy contributes £15.4 billion to the national economy and has considerable scope for further growth, boosted by the recent announcement of a 92 hectare enterprise zone in the Science Vale area in the south of the county

Home to a thriving voluntary sector with over 3,000 voluntary and community organisations and above average levels of volunteering

Banbury
Chipping Norton
Bicester
Charlbury
Woodstock
Kidlington
Burford
Witney
Eynsham
Carterton
Botley
Oxford
Wheatley
Thame
Abingdon
Berinsfield
Faringdon
Benson
Grove
Didcot
Wallingford
Wantage
Henley-On-Thames
Goring

Figure 1: Oxfordshire - largest towns, localities, development areas and key transport links

Development areas (Bicester, North Oxford, Science Vale)

☆ Park and Ride site

Localities
- Abingdon/Berinsfield
- Banbury
- Bicester/Kidlington
- Carterton/Burford/Chipping Norton
- Didcot
- Headington/Wheatley
- Henley/Sonning Common/Woodcote/Wallingford
- Iffley & Cowley
- North Oxford/Cumnor/Botley
- Oxford South East
- Thame/Watlington
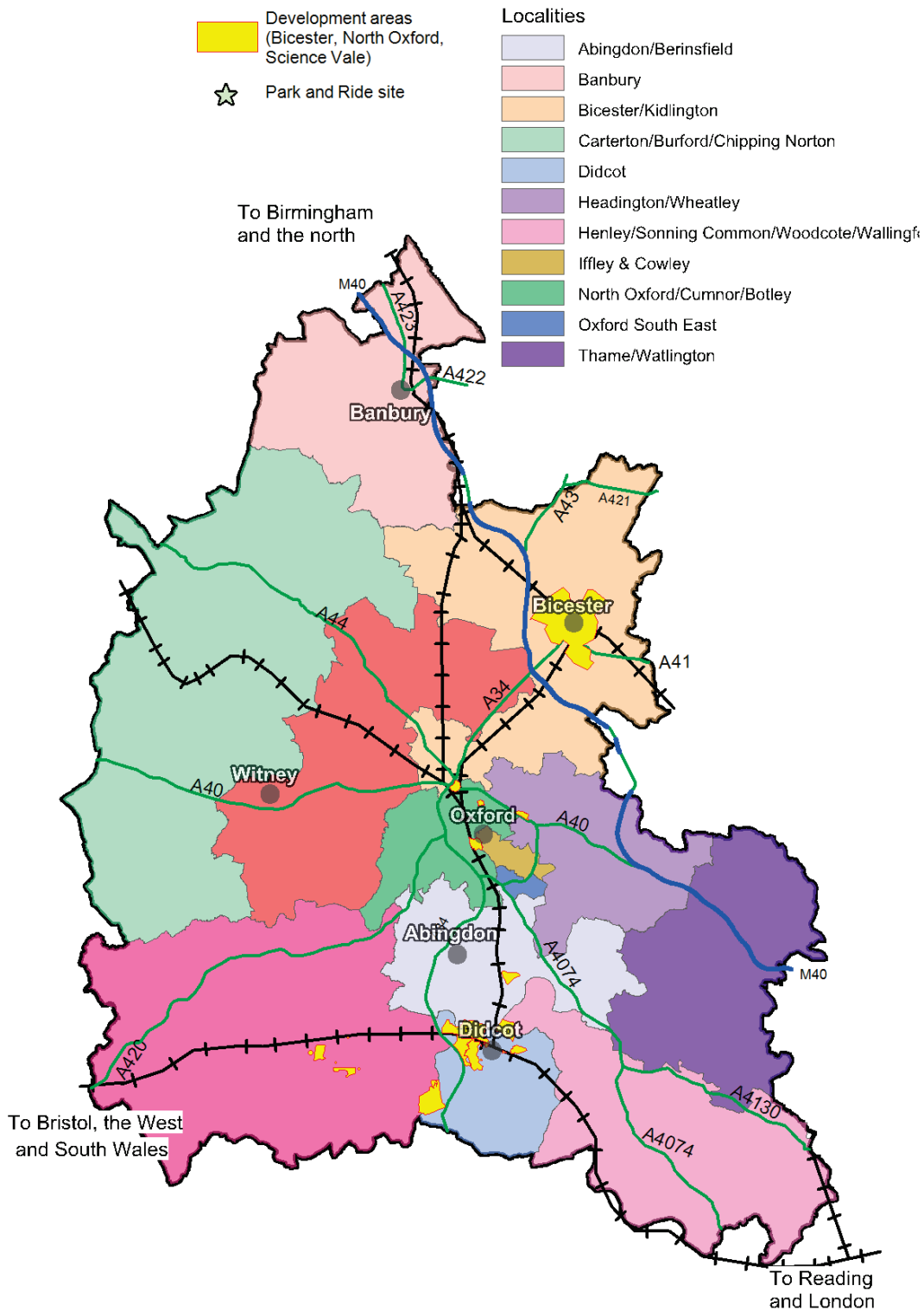
Oxfordshire's localities

Figure 1 identifies the county council's 11 priority localities, which centre on the city and market towns. As the Fire and Rescue Service is part of the county council, we recognise that each locality presents individual challenges and we are working towards joining up services to best meet local needs and ensure our communities are a safe place to grow, live, work and travel in.

Our challenges

Population growth and ageing

The population of Oxfordshire is forecast to rise 11 per cent to over 700,000 residents by 2026, with the biggest increases expected around Didcot and Harwell in the south, Carterton and Witney in the west and Bicester in the North. Didcot may be larger than Abingdon by 2026, with a projected 46,000 residents.

Our population is also living longer. The number of people aged 75 and over is projected to grow by 60 per cent between 2006 and 2026. This growth is not uniform across the county, but higher in our more rural districts than in the City. West Oxfordshire has the highest rates, followed in descending order by Cherwell, South and Vale with Oxford far below. Historical data shows that older people are at greater risk from suffering serious injuries or death from accidental fires.

Transport growth

Oxfordshire has a well-developed network of major roads and railways (see Figure 1). However, as figure 3 shows, traffic levels appear to be closely related to economic growth, with steady increases this decade being reversed since the recession began in 2008. However, traffic congestion remains a big challenge for the county, especially with the planned growth in housing and businesses. This can affect how quickly we can get to incidents during periods of heavy traffic or road network improvements.
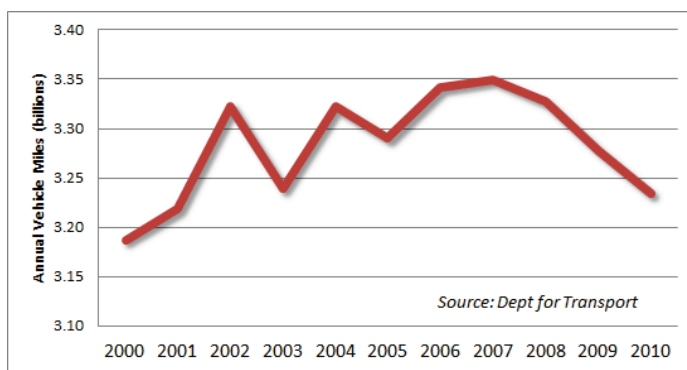
Figure 2: Average Vehicle Miles Source: Dept for Transport

There are several critical points on our transport network that tend to suffer from congestion:

- on the A34, especially between Didcot and the M40
- on the A40 between Witney and Headington
- around the Oxford Ring Road
- on the rail corridor through Oxford
- on routes in and around main towns.

Any increase in traffic will obviously put more pressure on these 'bottle-necks' unless improvements are made to the road and rail layouts at these points.

Figure 3 Traffic on major roads in Oxfordshire

Economic and housing developments

In 2011, 30 per cent of the county's workforce was employed in the public sector, making it particularly vulnerable to the impact of austerity measures.

However, the county is also home to a number of nationally and internationally recognised businesses, such as ISIS, Oxford Instruments, BMW Mini, Williams and Lotus Formula One; not to mention the city's two universities and its number of important military establishments.

Figure 4 Science Vale UK Enterprise Zone

Furthermore, Oxfordshire has significant plans for future economic and housing growth, with a focus on the Local Enterprise Partnership hubs – the Science Vale UK area (a Local Enterprise Zone), Bicester and Oxford City (shown in yellow in Figure 1 above).

There will be smaller but still significant developments at other locations including Banbury, Carterton and Witney.

As we develop our service we will consider residential and commercial areas that are growing, to ensure that we can continue to provide an excellent prevention, protection and response service to all areas of a changing county.

Therefore, we will continue to engage early in any planning processes throughout the county to address any areas of concern and give specialist advice where necessary.

Maintaining the county's reputation as a world class tourist destination

Cultural and creative businesses in Oxfordshire contribute in the region of £1.4 billion annually to the county's economy (around 10% of its total business community).

In addition, Oxford city is the sixth most visited city in the UK by international visitors - attracting approximately 9.5 million visitors per year and generating £770 million of income for local Oxford businesses.

Besides the historic city, there are also major tourist attractions across the county, such as Blenheim Palace, the Cotswolds, Bicester Village and Didcot Railway Centre.

The role of the Fire and Rescue Service is not only to ensure that our millions of visitors remain safe throughout their stay but also to help keep attractions and businesses open and accessible all year around.

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Our structure

There are currently 24 fire stations in Oxfordshire, which are staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year by a mix of full–time and on-call (retained) firefighters. They offer safety advice, education and a response to emergencies calls.

We have a front-line fleet of 34 fire engines and a number of specialist vehicles. This includes a hydraulic platform for performing rescues at height, a specialist rescue vehicle for attending road traffic collisions and other specialist rescues, an environmental protection unit (provided in partnership with the Environment Agency) and two mobile command units.

Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service:

24 fire stations

34 fire engines

1 Specialist Rescue Tender

250 full-time personnel

360 on-call firefighters

260,595 hectares covered

12,500 emergency calls per year

7,405 incidents attended in 2011

We employ over 250 full-time personnel (including middle and senior operational managers), over 360 on-call firefighters and 22 Control Room staff. These are supported by 50 specialist and administrative staff.

We are organised around three Fire Risk Areas based upon the five district council areas:

- West/Cherwell
- City
- South/ Vale

Figure 6 is a map of Oxfordshire split into the fire risk areas and showing the five districts and our 24 fire stations.

Figure 6: Oxfordshire's Fire Stations

Key

🔴 **Whole time station** – crewed by full time firefighter 24/7

⊖ **Day crewing station** – crewed by full time firefighters during the day and on-call firefighters

◯ **Retained station** – crewed by on-call firefighters 24/7

Our purpose:

'Securing a safer Oxfordshire'

Our purpose is to secure a safer Oxfordshire. This plan identifies the risks to public and firefighter safety, and sets out the things we are doing, and plan to do, to control them. Our approach is to prevent incidents happening, protect against their impact and respond quickly and effectively to minimise their effect to people and their communities. This is shown in Figure 7.

Figure 6: Members of the public on a 'fire awareness day'

We have a measurable 10-year strategic aim, known as '365 Alive', which was launched in 2006 and sets targets to save lives, save money for the Oxfordshire economy and make our communities safer through education. Specifically, our three strategic targets are, by 2016, to:

- Save 365 lives – reduce the loss of life in fires and road traffic collisions through the prevention, protection and response work of the Fire and Rescue Service.

- Save the economy £100,000,000 – through the reduced number of incidents, injuries and deaths and their direct and indirect costs to the economy.

- Deliver 840,000 safety messages to make people safer - through the prevention work of the Fire and Rescue Service and other partners.

Meeting our purpose

We must deal with the fire and rescue related risks that Oxfordshire faces in order to deliver our '*365 Alive'* targets. The risks are identified in our Operational Risk Register for Oxfordshire. This plan then considers how each of these risks could affect the public and firefighters, and explains what we currently do to manage these risks under three headings:

- **Prevention** – eliminating or reducing the likelihood of the risk occurring
- **Protection** – reducing the impact of the risk should it occur
- **Response** – providing a rapid and effective response should an incident happen

The plan then describes what we will look at in future to further prevent, protect and respond to risks and continue to deliver a service that is high performing and aims not expose our firefighters to uncalculated risks. Finally, it considers how our structure and the way we work continues to offer best value for money.

Annually, we decide on specific projects to reduce key risks. These are listed as our Community Risk Management Annual Action plan (which forms part of our county council service business plan "Safer by Design"). Each service function produces its own plan to deliver their specific objectives of the business plan.

Figure 7: From purpose to delivery

Our Purpose
Securing a Safer Oxfordshire

Strategic Aims
365alive
Think Safety

Oxfordshire Community Risk Management Plan
Dealing with risks to the community and ensuring we are fit for purpose

Prevention
- Education and advice
- Community safety initiatives

Protection
- Advice on and enforcement of Fire Safety legislation
- 'In-built' fire safety

Response
- Emergency response and urgent assistance
- Gathering risk information

Organisational Development
- **People** - getting the best from our firefighters and support staff
- **Assets** - making best use of our buildings, vehicles and equipment
- **Structure** - organising ourselves to operate efficiently, effectively and economically

Safer By Design - Annual Business Plan

Community Risk Management Annual Plan
Operational projects and activities

Resource Planning
Budgets, people development, asset management

Area/Functional Plans
Delivering the business plan

Fire Risk Area Plans

Functional Delivery Plans

How our plans fit within the wider context

We have a suite of plans to deliver our purpose, aligning our priorities and actions with the county council, our region and the Government's National Framework – see the diagram in Annex 1 (page 42) for details. At the heart of these plans is our Community Risk Management Plan (this document).

Integrated risk management planning

Our integrated risk management planning consists of three main public documents:

1. **Community Risk Management Plan**

2. **Community Risk Management Annual Plan (part of our business plan),** which details the projects to deliver the strategy, specifically:

    a. Evaluate the existing response, protection and prevention arrangements and identify specific opportunities for improvement
    b. Determine policies and standards for emergency response, protection and prevention activities
    c. Determine the resource requirements to meet those policies and standards

3. **Community Risk Management Annual Report,** which details how we have performed against our own targets and how this compares to other fire and rescue services. It lists what we have done to deal with significant risks and reports on any reviews of the service.

Our Operational Risk Register for Oxfordshire considers the national, regional and local fire and rescue related risks for Oxfordshire.

Systems are in place for monitoring, auditing and reviewing the effectiveness and currency of the Community Risk Management Plan. We will undertake an annual review of the plan and issue amendments when required.

Our business plan – Safer by Design

Our 'Safer by Design' business plan covers the Fire and Rescue Service and Emergency Planning function and includes the individual projects and activities to deliver our Community Risk Management Plan in the form of the Annual Action Plan. The business plan also contains our approach to resource planning, which identifies our budgets, training and development plan and asset management plan.

Our plan is evidence-based and focuses on localities. We seek to understand what works best in each area by working with local communities and organisations. The plan links directly with all the corporate strategic objectives within the county council's Corporate Plan.

Figure 8: OFRS fire engines outside the Radcliffe Camera, Oxford

Our core values

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service fully supports the underpinning values of the county council, as well as those agreed nationally by the Chief Fire Officers' Association, the Fire Brigades' Union, UNISON and a number of other Fire and Rescue Services. These combined values provide a central focus on the standards and principles we expect our employees to promote, uphold and maintain.

Figure 9: Firefighters deliver safety education in primary schools

Figure 10: Our Core Values

Diversity

Service to the community

Improvement

Each Other

We value service to the community by:

- focusing on our customers' needs
- working with all groups to reduce risks
- treating everyone fairly and with respect
- being accountable to those we serve
- striving for excellence in all we do

We value diversity in the Service and community by:

- treating everyone with dignity and respect
- providing varying solutions for different needs and expectations
- promoting equality of opportunity in employment and progression within the service
- challenging prejudice and discrimination

We value each other by practising and promoting:

- fairness and respect
- recognition of merit
- honesty, integrity and mutual trust
- personal development
- 'can-do' attitude, co-operative and inclusive working
- one-team approach

We value improvement at all levels of the Service by:

- taking responsibility for our performance
- promoting and supporting innovation
- embedding efficiency and effectiveness in all we do
- being open-minded
- responding positively to feedback
- learning from others
- consulting others

Our approach

Prevention is better than cure

The Fire and Rescue Service will always maintain an emergency response to calls for assistance. However, our emphasis towards securing a safer society has shifted to also encompass prevention and education. Multi-skilled employees along with voluntary agencies and other partners, help promote risk awareness, self-help, safeguarding and will sign-post specialist assistance and support when required. This approach embraces the preventative agenda and reduces the call on other council services such as Adult Social Care, which helps support the elderly.

Making the most of our resources

Despite our historic 'low cost and high performance' status, we must make the most of our 'standing assets' (fire stations, fire engines and equipment) in to the future. The county council has invested in additional full-time supervisory managers whose role is to support our fire stations that are crewed by retained duty 'on-call' personnel. They also help to crew the fire engines in rural areas. Going forward, these managers will help to deliver broader community safety initiatives in their local areas.

A learning organisation

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is a committed learning organisation that recognises the need for change in order to improve our cost efficiency and effectiveness. We continue to invite peer review of the service, which scrutinises how well we operate. Other fire authorities critically assess our service and identify areas where we can improve. We also compare our performance with similar fire and rescue services in order to share good practice.

> "Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service is providing a *good, low cost, effective service* and is *striving continuously to improve*."

Integration and collaboration

Being a highly integrated county council-run service, we already have a good track record of working with others to support the broader community safety agenda. We work with local partners, such as the ambulance, police and wider health services, as well as the county council, to tackle the increasing range of community safety and well-being issues. We recognise the value of effective partnership working in delivering the best service we can.

In order to continue to deliver excellent value for money, whilst maintaining resilient services, we are also looking to share specialist functions and assets with partners such as the Thames Valley Fire Control Room Service collaboration programme with Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

At the operational level, we share boundaries with six different fire and rescue services. We have extensive experience of working with our neighbouring services to resolve incidents near our borders. We are also an active member of the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum and regularly plan and train together for larger incidents.

Our performance

In order to continuously improve our service for the benefit of the people of Oxfordshire, we actively look at our day-to-day work and any changes that have been introduced. We regularly monitor key performance measures and take action to improve them.

We set challenging performance targets in all appropriate areas of work (including operational and business aspects). We believe in being open, honest and transparent about our performance; our annual performance can be viewed in the Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Performance web pages and in our Annual Report. These reports include details of different types of emergency incidents (such as fires and road traffic collisions) and identify any trends or patterns. They look at other non-emergency calls and how they have been dealt with, including unwanted fire alarm signals and hoax calls.

365 Alive performance

As at March 2012, six years into our 10-year campaign, we calculate:

365 Alive performance

280 people are still alive as a result of our work and interventions around fires and road traffic collisions - 64 more people than our target.

Almost £95 million has been saved from the economy as a result of our work and interventions at road traffic collisions and at fires in both homes and in businesses. This is almost £29 million more than our target.

Over 504,000 safety messages have been delivered to key audiences exceeding our target by over 136,000 people.

How quickly Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service responds

Oxfordshire County Council, as the Fire and Rescue authority, approves the targets for how quickly we will respond to emergencies (our *emergency response targets)*:

Under normal circumstances, when an emergency occurs, a fire engine will be sent from the nearest fire station. Our target is to get to all incidents within 11 minutes (80% of the time) and 14 minutes (95% of the time) – from when the fire engine is sent to when it arrives at the scene.

Response times will be affected by various factors, for example incident location, traffic and weather conditions.

Due to the rural nature of some of the communities in Oxfordshire, ensuring that a swift and effective response is available to everyone is a significant challenge, especially during periods of heavy snowfall or other delays to the road network. The service must ensure that it is innovative in its approach to provide the best response possible to everyone while maintaining its cost effectiveness.

Going forward, we will continuously challenge these targets to ensure we have the fire engines in the right place, and firefighters with the right skills, so we can make an effective response across Oxfordshire.

Section 2 – Our risks

A risk is a situation where firefighters or members of the public are exposed to danger. The risks that the Fire and Rescue Service has to manage are numerous and can vary in the likelihood of the situation occurring and the level of exposure to danger. This plan brings together national, regional and local risks and groups these under five categories:

- **Risk at home** –risks at home from emergency situations and other risks in the community that are not covered elsewhere.
- **Risk at work** –risks at work from emergency situations and hazardous processes and materials.
- **Risk whilst travelling** –risks while travelling by road rail, boats and aircraft.
- **Heritage risk** – risks to the wealth of places with historical value in Oxfordshire.
- **Extreme events** –extreme weather, environmental impacts and terrorist activities.

Each category includes:

- the risks to both the public and firefighters;
- the existing measures to prevent, protect and/or respond to each risk, and;
- a list of future options to be explored up to 2018.

Our operational risk register summarises the combined local, regional (Thames Valley Community Risk Register) and national risks (National Risk Register) facing us. The following section summarises the risk identified and puts them into context.
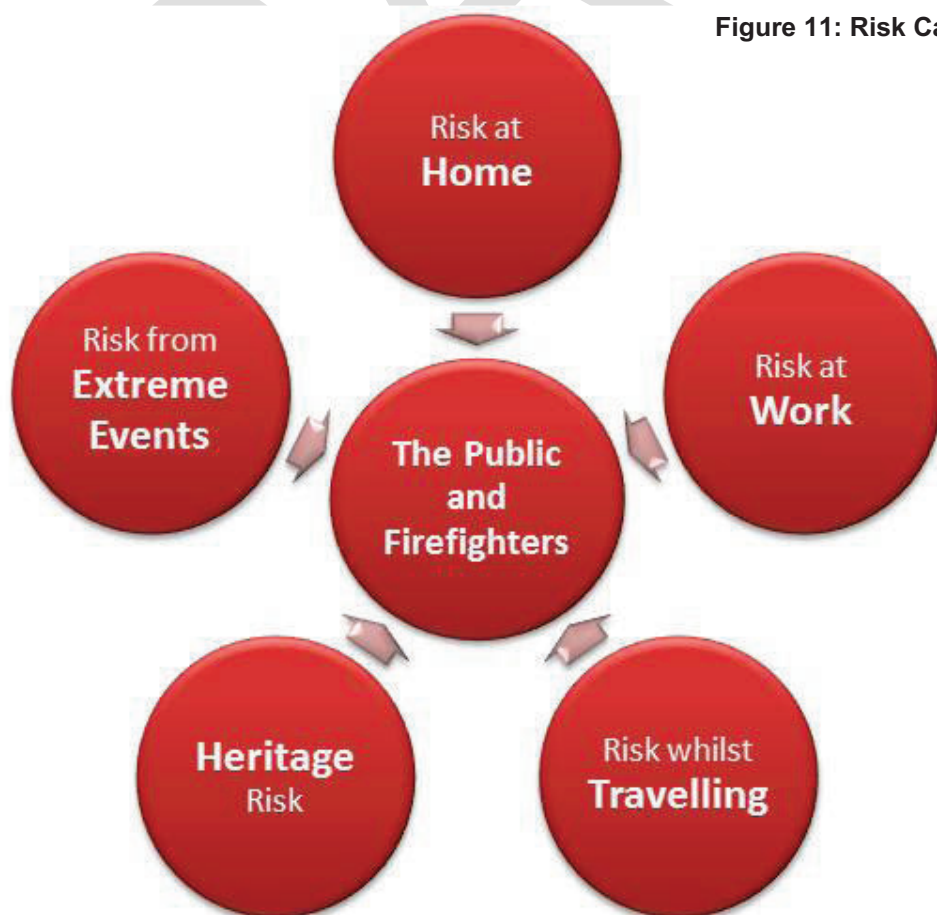
Figure 11: Risk Categories

Oxfordshire Community Risk Management Plan 2013-2018 │Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service
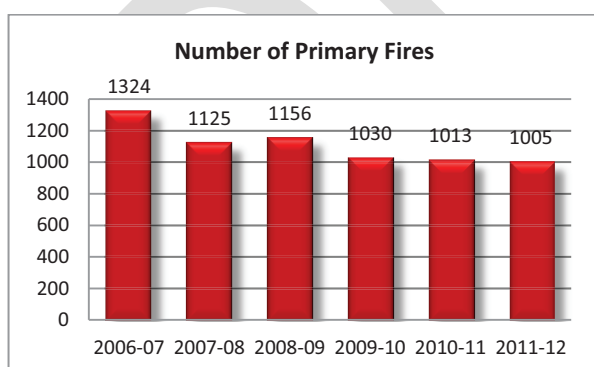www.oxfordshire.gov.uk
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Risk at home

Identified risks to the public

In 2010 there were 36,000 fires in people's homes in England alone. There were 7,400 people injured as a result of fire and 321 people died, of which over two thirds involved fires in the home (Fire Statistics Monitor: 2011).

In 2011/12 there were 346 accidental fires in Oxfordshire homes, 20 people injured as a result of fire and one person died.
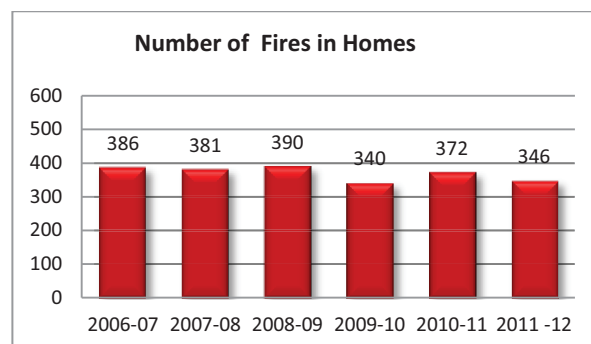
We are very pleased with our proactive community fire safety work. As figure 13 shows there has been a general reduction in primary[2] fires over the last six years. However, as Figure 14 shows, the number of fires in homes has remained fairly static over the same period. The overall reduction is largely due to the increased amount of prevention by fire and rescue services, both locally and nationally, and also fire safety features included in homes. Behaviour has also changed; people are more likely to have working smoke alarms, home fire escape plans and basic fire safety checks.

Number of Primary Fires

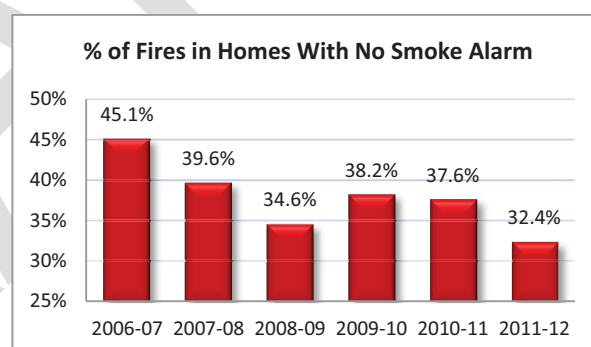| Year	Number
2006-07	1324
2007-08	1125
2008-09	1156
2009-10	1030
2010-11	1013
2011-12	1005

Figure 12: Number of primary fires in Oxfordshire

However, of the 346 fires in homes we attended in 2011/12 nearly 4 out of 10 did *not* have a smoke alarm fitted (see Figure 15). Of

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[2] Primary Fires are reported fires or any fires involving

the remainder that did have smoke alarms fitted almost 1 in 3 of these alarms were not working (up from 1 in 5 in 2010/11), often because the batteries had run out. We recognise we need to do more in this area to create a safer Oxfordshire.

Number of Fires in Homes

Year	Number
2006-07	386
2007-08	381
2008-09	390
2009-10	340
2010-11	372
2011 -12	346

Figure 13: Number of fires in Oxfordshire homes

National data shows that you are twice as likely to die in a house fire that has no working smoke alarm.

% of Fires in Homes With No Smoke Alarm

Year	Percentage
2006-07	45.1%
2007-08	39.6%
2008-09	34.6%
2009-10	38.2%
2010-11	37.6%
2011-12	32.4%

Figure 14: Percentage of home fires with no smoke alarm

Different construction types, e.g. timber-framed buildings, can also affect the likelihood and severity of a fire. Another important factor in reducing fire casualties in Oxfordshire has been our improvements in the emergency response that we provide to rescue people and extinguish fires. These include improved technology, training, techniques and equipment.

Figure 15: Firefighter undertakes realistic fire behaviour training

Those most at risk

An analysis of fire fatalities from 2001 to 2011 have shown that there are three predominant factors that apply to people who have died in fires at home:

- alcohol or drug misuse
- mobility issues
- health issues

People who are more likely to have a fire in their home include:

- older people (65 +)
- single adults living alone
- children and young people (1 – 17 years old)
- smokers
- people with mobility problems
- people with sensory impairment
- people with alcohol or drug use problems
- people with learning disabilities
- people with a mental health problems
- people from minority ethnic or faith groups
- people in temporary accommodation or poor housing
- people using dangerous appliances

Many of these groups are the most difficult to successfully engage with. A key part of this document covers how we intend to continue improving our communication with such higher risk groups, including maintaining and expanding partnerships with the county's public, private and voluntary organisations.

"Almost twice as many people over the age of 50 now die in dwelling fires in the UK each year compared to those under 50"[3]

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service uses different sources of data to identify where the people in greatest danger actually live in order to target our prevention work.

Other risks in the community

Other risks in the community include travelling, extreme events,(both covered later in this plan), and dangers associated with sporting and leisure activities. We regularly help rescue people who are trapped by severe weather, in water, at height or even simply locked out of their homes.

The Fire and Rescue Service also responds to incidents that pose a risk to the environment, including grass or woodland fires. Oxfordshire has many Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in its communities, which can be seriously affected by fires or chemical releases if not dealt with effectively.

Figure 16: Firefighters training in realistic conditions

Malicious false alarms or hoax calls are a particular problem for all emergency services. As Figure 18 shows, although the numbers are relatively low and appear to be falling, each hoax call wastes limited public resources and puts firefighters and those in genuine need at higher risk.

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[3] *Ageing Safely* – Chief Fire Officers Association - 2011

Malicious false alarms

Year	Value
2006-07	146
2007-08	121
2008-09	96
2009-10	46
2010-11	53
2011-12	55
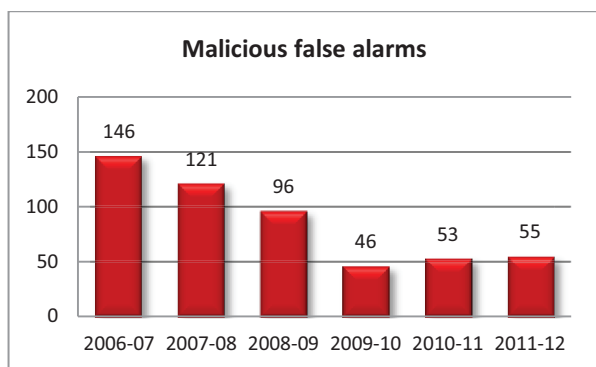
Figure 17: Malicious false alarms in Oxfordshire

Identified risks to firefighters

Although no longer the main proportion of firefighters' work, dealing with fires still presents serious danger due to threat of fire, smoke, the construction of the building and the buildings contents. The tragic deaths of two firefighters at a fire in a high rise block in Stevenage in 2005 and a further two firefighter deaths at a tower block blaze in Southampton in 2010, underlines the danger presented by this type of building in particular. As a result of these incidents, we revised our policies, procedures, training and equipment and continue to review them to deal as safely as possible with such incidents.

Firefighters wear technologically advanced clothing and breathing apparatus to protect themselves from heat, flames and smoke. They tackle fires using advanced equipment and are highly skilled in operating in smoke-filled environments with no visibility to locate and rescue people who are trapped. Firefighters also learn about different types of building construction to understand the risks they can present – as well as studying how fire develops and behaves, which includes regular exercising in realistic, but controlled, fire conditions.

With the success of our prevention work and the falling number of fires, individual firefighters may have less real experience of fires. This places even more importance on our operational procedures, excellent command and leadership and thorough, regular and realistic training.

Existing management strategy

> **Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service, in partnership with other service providers, fitted over**
> **9000 domestic smoke alarms from 2004 to 2011**.

Prevention

Home Fire Risk Checks raise the awareness of the danger of fire in people's homes and encourage the fitting of smoke alarms, significantly contributing to the reduction in fire deaths and injuries. We use data (for example demographic profiling) to target those who are most at risk, and working with our partners in health and social care, ensure they receive the appropriate advice and help with safety in the home (including escape plans and smoke alarms).

> **Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service, in partnership with other service providers, educate**
> **5000 children a year at the Oxford Safety Centre.**

Education is a core part of our business plan and aims to prevent children and young people from being harmed or killed. Key activities include:

- Engaging with many thousands of children and young people per year in the county's schools through our Key Stages schools' programmes.

- Providing direct counselling to nearly 40 children and young people per year using specially trained fire setter counselling staff.
- Divert children and young people from anti-social behaviour by engaging in partnerships and acting as role models.
- Educate an average of 5,000 children and young people in fire safety skills and responsible citizenship per year through our Junior Citizen Programme.
- Identify and disseminate good practice in working with children and young people.

We started our Fire Cadet scheme in 1993 and now work with up to one hundred 12-18 year-olds each year. We provide them with a training programme that includes fitness, communications, team work and basic life-saving skills, leading to a Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award.

Protection

Sprinklers and Automatic Water Suppression Systems

Sprinklers have been installed in businesses for many years and are proven to reduce the damage from spreading fires. It is now possible to put sprinklers and suppression systems into people's homes, although relatively few have been fitted in Oxfordshire.

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service strongly believe that fitting sprinklers or automatic water suppression systems will reduce the number of fire deaths and injuries, save people's property and improve firefighter safety. Where appropriate, our officers recommend the systems when planning consultations and giving advice.

Response and intervention

Fires

When we attend fires in people's homes we send the right people and equipment needed to deal with the incident. We use the latest equipment and techniques, including breathing apparatus, thermal imaging cameras and forced ventilation fans to resolve the incident as quickly and safely as possible. This helps to rescue people and minimise fire damage.

Water rescue

Oxfordshire has many waterways, which have associated risks of flooding and drowning. We have firefighters trained to rescue people from both moving and still water, including   faster moving 'white water'. They will also respond to national emergencies resulting from large-scale flooding. Our firefighters identify potential areas of danger on our waterways and learn the best locations to launch our rescue craft.

> **Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service responds to over 3 incidents a day that are not fire related.**

Rescue from height

Every firefighter is trained and required to work safely at height. Every fire engine carries rope access equipment. We have specific policies and procedures for working at height and for tackling high-rise incidents effectively, while complying with legal safety requirements.

Responding with the ambulance service

In a number of rural localities, firefighters will respond to certain emergency calls made to the ambulance service. These incidents are usually heart attacks or breathing difficulties in locations where firefighters can arrive before the ambulance service. Firefighters are trained to deliver the immediate first aid that may be required but will always be backed up by ambulance crews who take over on arrival.

Risk at home

Future options

To continue to improve our services we will:

- Review the way we respond to incidents in residential areas.
- Review the vehicles, equipment and techniques that we use, including new technology such as Ultra High Pressure Cutting Extinguishers (UHPCE). This equipment projects a super fine mist of water into a building and has the capability to add an abrasive grit into the spray. The grit allows the spray to cut through walls so the spray-jet can be applied from the outside, immediately improving conditions inside the building for anyone trapped.
- Consider expanding our current joint working with the Ambulance Service.
- Review the level of emergency response resources required at different times of the day and week, based on local risk analysis and incident trends.
- Develop our work with neighbouring fire and rescue services to ensure people receive the quickest possible response to an emergency, regardless of borders.

To ensure we remain excellent value for money we will:

- Review the vehicles and equipment we use when responding to different incidents. This will include harnessing the new technology of multi-functional and specialist vehicles to address the vast range of incidents we attend..
- Develop a management strategy to allow fire stations to become more valuable community assets.

To build on our engagement with vulnerable groups we will:

- Develop current and new partnerships with other public sector agencies and volunteer groups to further improve access to and delivery of prevention services to vulnerable members of our community.

To continue to develop our partnerships we will:

- Consider engaging with, and helping to develop, volunteer groups to assist in fire prevention education.
- Work further with other Fire and Rescue Authorities, at the appropriate level, to deliver savings and maintain effective working between different fire and rescue services.
- Foster stronger partnerships with local businesses to encourage them to release employees to undertake the role of 'on-call' firefighters.

To build on our influence with Government and other decision makers we will:

- Continue to lobby local and national bodies to increase installation of sprinklers and automatic water suppression systems in future residential developments.
- Work with our partners to encourage the installation of sprinklers and automatic water suppression systems in existing domestic buildings.

To develop and integrate our plans with other services and areas we will:

- Consider exploring joint planning with other local public services, to create a 'place map' of community risks, aims and priorities.
- Consider a coordinated approach to planning with neighbouring services.

Risk at work

In Oxfordshire, there is an average of around **four fires a week that involve property that is either publicly or commercially owned**.

We investigate each incident and analyse national trends to identify people who are most at risk from fire when at work or when using commercial facilities.

Fires in businesses
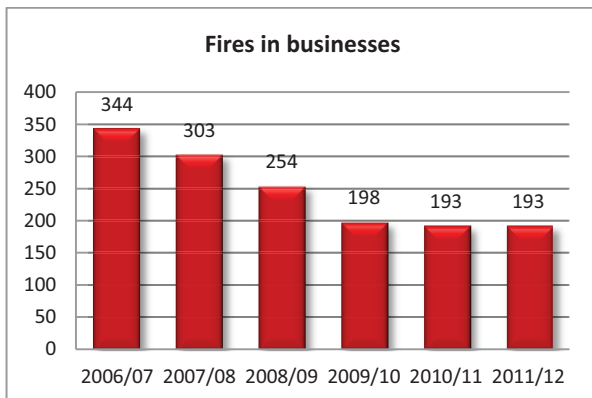

Figure 18: Number of fires in Oxfordshire businesses

Identified risks to the public

Although the risks to people while at work are not statistically as high as those when at home, they are still significant. There is a legal requirement under the Fire Safety Order 2005 for employers to reduce the risk from fire to both their employees and their customers; we have the legal responsibility to enforce this. Annex 3 of this document details our policy and approach.

In the UK
45% of serious business fires are arson related

The danger of fire can be higher in some businesses due to the nature of their work. The tragic deaths of four firefighters at a warehouse fire in Atherstone, Warwickshire in 2007 highlights the risks that some modern

businesses can present (the warehouse was the size of four football pitches). We focus our fire safety audit programme on higher risk premises but offer free advice to all businesses.

Deliberate Property Fires
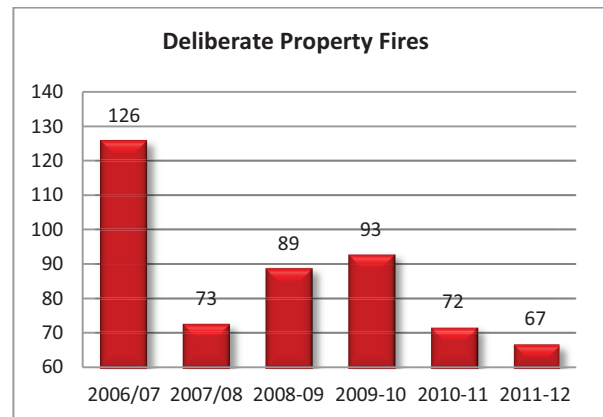
Figure 19: Deliberate property fires in Oxfordshire

According to the Arson Prevention Bureau, up to 80 per cent of businesses never fully recover from a serious fire, and 45 per cent of these fires are arson related. We provide free, impartial advice to improve the fire safety management of businesses. However, if necessary, we will enforce legislation when acceptable standards are not met.

Figure 20: Firefighting at a Witney warehouse

Identified risks to firefighters

Since 1991, thirteen firefighters have died dealing with fires in commercial properties in the UK. These fires can be particularly dangerous to firefighters because the buildings can be very large, complex structures with few windows (e.g. factories and warehouses). The construction and/or contents can also cause rapid development of fire and the building's subsequent collapse. There are also many chemical processes used for manufacturing that can

present a serious danger to firefighters, members of the public and the environment.

Existing management strategy

Prevention

We have a legal responsibility to provide fire prevention advice to businesses under the Fire and Rescue Act 2004. In turn, businesses have a legal requirement to carry out a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment under the [Fire](#) [Safety](#) [Order](#). As part of our risk-based approach to inspection (which uses national best practice and outcomes of national fire data and societal life risk), we audit assessments and offer advice to improve a business' fire safety management. We also enforce the law, if risk assessments have not been undertaken or maintained, or do not minimise the risk to people lives.

We will ensure that companies understand and mitigate the risks their business presents to the public and their staff, as well as train their staff accordingly. Our advice and audits help businesses to reduce the potential for arson by implementing simple measures as part of their fire safety management.

Protection

During the development phase of any new building or major alteration works to commercial buildings, we will liaise with local authority building control officers to ensure that an acceptable level of safety and fire protection is provided, as set by the relevant standards. For more complex buildings, we may be required to approve innovative fire safety management systems that do not fall within the set standards. This enables architects to design intricate buildings, while

maintaining the safety of the people that use them.

Response and intervention

We respond to fires in all business premises and we are trained to deal with expected general hazards. Firefighters visit certain high-risk premises to familiarise themselves with specific hazards and gather information that will be useful in an emergency. Regular visits ensure firefighters keep up to date with businesses as they develop and change.

Risk at work Future options

To continue to improve our services we will:

- Review our Fire Safety Audit and risk rating procedures to ensure that businesses with higher risks provide adequate fire safety management at their places of work.
- Review the way we respond to commercial premises.
- Review the vehicles and equipment we use when responding to different business premises.
- Review the way we undertake Fire Safety Audits.

To ensure we remain excellent value for money we will:

- Review the availability of emergency response resources based on an analysis of the local risks throughout both the 24-hour day period, and across the different days of the week.

Risk whilst travelling

Identified risks to the public

Although the number of people killed and seriously injured on our roads has declined over the last decade, it has levelled out in recent years (see Figure 21), with an average of three or four fatalities per month and one serious injury every day on Oxfordshire roads. Nevertheless, this figure is still not acceptable.

> Every person seriously injured in a road collision will cost the national economy an estimated £178,160, and every person killed costs the economy an estimated £1,585,510 (Reported Road Casualties Great Britain 2009: Annual Report, *Department for Transport*).

Although UK Fire and Rescue Services have always rescued people from road collisions, since 2004 they have had a legal responsibility to do so.

Traffic accidents are most likely to occur when roads are slippery due to rain or ice and when visibility is reduced by poor light or fog. Other major contributing factors to accidents include excessive speed, tiredness, alcohol and drugs, and driver distractions caused by mobile phones or other devices.

The county council investigates road engineering solutions for parts of the road transport network where accidents occur most frequently. Education programmes are delivered by the County Council Road Safety Team, which is now part of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service. This is sometimes carried out in collaboration with other agencies such as the police or local community safety officers.

Identified risks to firefighters

The risks to firefighters when dealing with serious road traffic collisions are extremely high, especially on major or fast roads. Firefighters must manage traffic to ensure a safe area to work, both in and around the incident. Depending on injuries and vehicle damage, firefighters may use hydraulic cutting equipment to carefully release people. Whilst doing this they must consider the construction of the vehicle and its safety systems, such as airbags. Although designed to save the passengers' lives, safety systems can present a danger to the firefighters attempting to cut through the structure of a vehicle.

Vehicles are continuously being improved for safety and fuel efficiency. The development of alternative fuels, whether it is electric, gas, hydrogen or bio-fuels, presents further potential hazards to firefighters.

In addition, many chemicals and hazardous materials are transported by road and rail. When involved in a collision, these can present serious dangers to firefighters, the community and the environment. Firefighters will deal with the initial phase of all hazardous materials incidents and, in some cases, will make the area safe until specialist teams arrive.
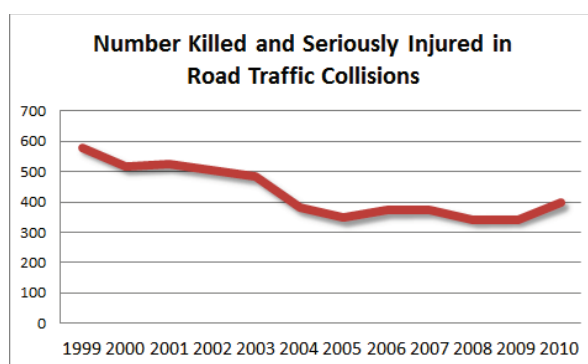

Figure 21: Number killed and seriously injured on Oxfordshire roads

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Existing management strategy

Prevention

Education – The key aim of '365 Alive' is to reduce the numbers of people killed and seriously injured on our roads throughout the county. Education is crucial. We visit young adults in their last years of school and deliver our '**Choices and Consequences'** programme, which uses hard hitting case studies to illustrate the potential dangers of poor driving. The programme is currently delivered to all Key Stage 4 students in secondary schools across Oxfordshire.

We strongly believe that the programme is delivering a real reduction in the number of new drivers involved in road traffic collisions. The programme receives exceptionally good feedback and national recognition for its impact on the behaviour of young drivers.

> Drivers aged **17-25** are **70%** more likely to be killed or seriously injured on the road compared to other drivers.

Road Safety Team – The Fire and Rescue Service includes the county council's dedicated Road Safety Team. We work with partners to run road safety campaigns and events to reduce collisions by trying to educate and change driver behaviour. Events include child cycle training, child pedestrian training, child seatbelt fitting and young drivers and motorcyclist themed events, which aim to solve county wide or specific local problems.

In 2011, Oxfordshire introduced 50mph speed limits on the most dangerous stretches of a number of our dual carriageways to reduce the risk and severity of accidents.

Protection

Physical road layout and traffic calming measures can be effective in reducing the number of accidents on the road. We consult on road network improvements and ensure proposed measures are as effective as possible in reducing road collisions, while maintaining traffic flow. The county council has a team that identifies areas where high numbers of accidents occur and delivers road engineering solutions if appropriate. The team also bears in mind the effect that 'calming' solutions might have on the time it takes us to respond to local communities.

Response and intervention

Collisions involving transport can be very difficult to resolve. All our fire engines carry sophisticated equipment for dealing with such incidents, including hydraulic equipment to cut through a vehicle's structure. Our firefighters are also trained to assist the ambulance service and give initial first-aid treatment when required.

We also have a range of specialist rescue vehicles that carry a wider range of equipment to deal with even the most complicated transport incidents, including heavy goods vehicles, trains and aircraft.

Fire engines also carry equipment to deal with hazardous material spillages to protect the environment. We have a specialist environmental protection unit (delivered in partnership with the Environment Agency) to assist at larger incidents of this type.

Figure 22: Fire crews release the driver of a car that left the road and landed in a garden

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Risk whilst travelling
Future options

To continue to develop education and prevention we will:

- Consider developing more targeted and innovative safety education initiatives, together with the police and other agencies.
- Build on our integrated approach to delivering road safety education using resources from across the county council and other partners.

To continue to improve our services we will:

- Develop the work of the Oxfordshire County Council Road Safety Team.
- Review the way we work with the Ambulance Service at road traffic collisions, to ensure we continue to provide high-quality casualty care.
- Review our response to all transport incidents to ensure it remains 'fit for purpose'.

To ensure we remain excellent value for money we will:

- Review our equipment, training and mutual aid arrangements to ensure we are able to deal with large and complex transport incidents from major rail and aircraft accidents to smaller one-vehicle collisions, whilst also maintaining a cost-effective service.

Figure 23: Firefighters are responsible of releasing people from collisions into the care of the ambulance service

Heritage risk

Figure 24: Incident at Blenheim Palace

Identified risks to the public

Oxfordshire has over 12,000 listed buildings, including many sites of importance to the country's national heritage. The city of Oxford is internationally famous for its university and college buildings, some of which date back to medieval times. Blenheim Palace heads a list of nationally-important stately homes and is one of 390 Grade I listed buildings in the county.

> **Oxfordshire has:**
> **12,000+** Listed Buildings
> **390** Grade I Listed

Within Oxfordshire there are also art, books and artefacts of national and international importance that need to be protected. In certain areas of Oxfordshire, tourism is a significant part of the economy, relying heavily on these buildings and their treasures. Therefore, reducing the risk of fire and damage not only protects the physical objects themselves but also the livelihoods of these communities.

Identified risks to firefighters

Heritage buildings often have complex layouts and, coupled with their old construction, can present extreme dangers to firefighters during a fire. The high value of these buildings and their contents may require extensive firefighting operations, including complicated salvage work to save priceless artefacts.

Existing management strategy

Prevention

We work with heritage building owners and occupiers and advise them how to reduce the risk of fire through effective prevention policies and fire safety management.

Protection

All commercial buildings must have minimum standards of safety. Achieving these standards in heritage buildings can be very challenging. We have specially trained officers to discuss solutions with owners and occupiers of any heritage building.

We pre-plan for incidents involving heritage buildings. Comprehensive plans have been created for the county's heritage sites that have the greatest value and may present the greatest risks to the community and/or firefighters. These plans ensure that if a fire happens, we are able to deal with it effectively and minimise damage and disruption.

Figure 25: A timber frame building quickly destroyed by fire

Response and intervention

Firefighters are aware of the heritage buildings in their local areas and those that the service has special firefighting plans for. Firefighters are familiar with these plans and regularly undergo operational exercises with the staff and managers of the building. The exercises involve full-scale simulations of serious fires in these buildings, ensuring the plans and actions are fully tested.

Heritage risk

Future options

To continue to protect Oxfordshire's grand heritage we will:

- Work with the owners and occupiers to ensure that the significant heritage risks are continually evaluated and amendments to plans made as required.

- Develop our ability to effectively respond to this type of incident, using new fire protection / suppression technology and innovations in emergency response equipment.
- Review our programme of operational exercises involving High Risk Heritage Premises.

Figure 26: Rope rescue crews training in Oxford

Risk from extreme events

Identified risks to the public and communities

The following events can create very high risk to people and their communities:

- large public events
- civil disturbance
- chemical and biological accidents or spillages
- explosions
- acts of terrorism
- extreme weather events; snow, flood, wind and wildfire
- human and animal pandemics

Figure 27: Firefighters in chemical protection suits

The emergence of global risks has a real impact on the way we assess the potential of extreme events and the way we plan for them. People in the UK now live in a world where the threat of terrorism is ever present, where the impact of climate change is more extreme and the risk of a human pandemic is still current.

Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service (as both an emergency responder and as the county council service responsible for Emergency Planning) is part of the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum (TVLRF). This partnership comprises the police, local authorities, fire, ambulance, Environment Agency, health, military, and utility and transport companies across Oxfordshire, Berkshire, and Buckinghamshire. TVLRF plans to deal with the consequences of any large-scale event within the county, whilst also being able to support other Fire and Rescue Services as part of a national response.

The TVLRF provides information and advice about actions to take to ensure that residents, visitors and businesses in the Thames Valley are ready and prepared - before, during and after a major incident.

Figure 28: Fire crews assisting wheel chair user

This includes general emergency and risk information relating to severe weather, fire, chemical incidents, major disruption to business activities and localised flooding.

Visit the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum website for more details - http://www.thamesvalleylrf.org.uk/

The risks to the region are identified by the Thames Valley Resilience Forum while national risks are identified by the Cabinet Office.

Identified risks to firefighters

As well as the more generic dangers that extreme events present to firefighters (e.g. firefighting, vehicle extrication, working at height), there are also a number of specific dangers (e.g. chemical, nuclear, radiological and biological hazards, major building collapse, wide-area flooding and civil disturbance). We establish effective command and control arrangements to ensure our firefighters can operate as safely as practicable in such complex and hazardous environments.

Firefighters train extensively in complicated procedures to deal effectively with this type of incident, even though we do not expect them to happen regularly.

Existing management strategy

Figure 29: Firefighters undressing from chemical protection clothing at exercise

Prevention

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service and the County Council Emergency Planning Team advises communities and businesses how to reduce any potential risks and create comprehensive local community plans to help prevent and recover from such events.

In partnership with the Environment Agency, we also offer advice to those who are at risk from flooding. We are part of local Safety Advisory Groups, whose role is to improve the safety at all public events in the county.

Protection

We have comprehensive business continuity plans that are designed to prevent extreme events from having an adverse effect on our essential services. As a consequence, we are confident that we will be able to provide a level of emergency response even if affected by high levels of absence caused by pandemic flu or another similar event.

Response and intervention

We work in partnership with all other agencies involved with extreme events to maintain effective working across Fire and Rescue Services and other emergency services. Fire officers regularly train with other emergency services and agencies within a nationally agreed set of command and control procedures to ensure a co-ordinated response to any large-scale incident. We also use locally-agreed infrastructure and information systems. We have officers who are specially trained to work alongside the police (Inter-agency Liaison Officers) and our senior managers regularly take part in strategic exercises with colleagues from the police, ambulance service, hospitals, Environment Agency and the Health Protection Agency.

Furthermore, the Thames Valley Fire Control Service programme is aimed at improving our resilience across both Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire when dealing with such large or 'spate' incidents.

We also respond to incidents that involve hazardous materials, which could seriously contaminate the environment. We have highly trained and suitably equipped, Hazardous Material and Environmental Protection Advisors, who can respond to incidents day or night, as well as providing additional command and control at other types of incidents.

As part of the country's national resilience resources, we maintain a Detection Identification and Monitoring Team (for hazardous materials), an Incident Response Unit (mass decontamination for the public) and a High Volume Pump (for flooding incidents and the movement of large quantities of water).

Figure 30: Flooding in Abingdon during 2007

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Risk from extreme events

Future options

To continue to improve our services we will:

- Review the way we respond to extreme events in light of any changing environmental factors.

- Develop and improve our business continuity plans, learning from the experience of other services and partners. Consider expanding our intra- and inter-operability assets (those we use with other Fire and Rescue Services, as well as other services such as police and health).

- Explore opportunities to share specialist functions, assets and equipment with partners and neighbouring fire and rescue services in order to maintain and improve our effectiveness.

To continue to develop our partnerships we will:

- Continue to work in close partnership with businesses in high risk industries to reduce the dangers associated with handling chemicals and other hazardous materials.

- Build our partnership with The Environment Agency and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to reduce the environmental impacts of incidents

- Develop the way we work with other agencies and other fire & rescue services (through the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum and Fire & Rescue Service Strategic Resilience Board for instance) to ensure intra- and inter-operability at large-scale incidents.

Figure 31: Rescue exercise from lake at Blenheim Palace

Section 3 – Fit for purpose

Operational challenges

As well as the many external risks and challenges that we face, we also need to ensure that we manage the risks and challenges that we face as a public sector organisation including:

- Maintaining the Retained Duty System
- Delivering our services in a period of public sector funding cuts
- Making the most of our resources such as people, buildings, vehicles and equipment – see next section: Organisational Development

Maintaining the Retained Duty System

Of just over 600 firefighters in Oxfordshire, some 360 are on-call, working the Retained Duty System (RDS). This means that they may have another job, run a business or work at home but are available to respond to incidents and undertake regular weekly training. All 24 of our fire stations have at least one fire engine that is staffed by on-call (retained) firefighters.

Our two key challenges are:

- Attracting and retaining sufficient RDS firefighters, especially during an economic downturn when businesses may reconsider releasing their employees to provide on-call firefighting duties
- Ensuring RDS firefighters have appropriate training and development. This becomes increasingly challenging as their role becomes more diverse and they must learn new techniques and new technologies.

Funding

We are very proud to be one of the highest performing services in the UK, with one of the lowest cost levels. However, we have had to

make a number of savings and continue to deliver efficiencies and improvements to maintain our cost-effectiveness.

We are not anticipating the public sector funding position to improve significantly during the five-year life of this plan and therefore expect to be constantly reviewing our service to get the most out of the resources that we have.

Around 75% (£18m) of our budget is spent on employees, and over 90% of that figure (£16.2m) is firefighter pay. This highlights how valuable our firefighters are and how we must ensure that we maximise their productivity. As a consequence, we are constantly review working patterns and rotas, as well as crewing levels and training and development programmes.

Figure 32: Firefighter training at Fire Service College

Organisational development

This is about developing the type of organisation we need to be to ensure we remain fit for purpose and continue to make Oxfordshire safer.

People

Training and development

As we face a broader range of risks associated with new buildings, technology and extreme risks, we expect more from our firefighters. Regular and realistic operational training on techniques, procedures and equipment is vital to maintain firefighter effectiveness and to reduce the risks to the public and themselves. For more senior operational managers, the skills needed to command large complex incidents need to be developed and regularly practiced.

We have a sophisticated approach to training and development, which follows the principles of the nationally-recognised Integrated Personal Development System and uses a three-phase model:

- Phase One: acquisition – acquiring the skills and/or knowledge
- Phase Two: application – applying the skills/knowledge
- Phase Three: maintenance – maintaining the skills/knowledge through regular refresh

Figure 33: Firefighter training at Fire Service College

Culture

As an organisation we have a strong team spirit and a 'can do' culture of getting things done. We reinforce this through the county council staff awards, the Fire and Rescue Annual Awards Evening, Staff Briefings and weekly internal communications. The nature of our work means that stations and teams often form close knit social groups, which go beyond the workplace.

Figure 34: Firefighters practice drills at Rewley Road Fire Station

Recruitment and retention

The role of a firefighter is still highly valued and when we recruit to full-time positions we receive applications from across the country. However, we do face a challenge ensuring that in some areas we have the appropriate number of RDS firefighters to respond around the clock.

Assets

We own all 24 of our fire stations, plus 34 fire engines and various specialist vehicles. These assets and our other equipment are worth £27 million at current market values (1st April 2011). It is crucial, therefore, that we get the best value from these assets by buying them for the best possible prices, by maintaining them well and by maximising their usage.

> We currently have the best value fire engines in the South East Region.

To maximise usage and value, we need to ensure that we have the right number and type of assets in the right places at the right

times. To achieve this we analyse past data and forecast the trends of different types of incidents, including where and when they occur. We also analyse current and predicted response times to identify where best to locate our assets.

Structure

We are constantly reviewing our structures to ensure that we make best use of available resources. Decisions are made at the most appropriate level. We aim to maximise responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness, while balancing local, 'on the job' knowledge with experience and strategic awareness.

At operational incidents we follow national guidance for command structures, which ensure that we have suitable control of the incident and can operate with other Fire and Rescue Services at major incidents. This approach also reduces the risks to firefighters and the public.

Figure 35: Extrication equipment on Specialist Rescue Unit

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Summary of future challenges

In order to maintain the most effective response to emergencies we must ask ourselves a number of questions:

Why? – Why do we provide the services that we do? Fire and Rescue Services have a number of statutory duties detailed by the Fire and Rescue Act, the Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order and the Civil Contingencies Act. We also choose to get involved with the delivery of services that we believe are important in improving community safety. We need to regularly review that the services we provide are the most appropriate and cost-effective.

How? - How will we respond to incidents? How will we maintain an appropriate level of service during the most extreme circumstances or when we are dealing with large incidents - both locally or nationally? Can this be done more effectively in collaboration?

What? - What equipment, vehicles and skills should we be using in the future to ensure we provide an excellent and cost-effective emergency response – while, at the same time, reducing the risk to firefighters wherever practicable?

When? - We currently aim to provide a uniform level of available emergency resources, regardless of the changing levels of risk throughout the day or on different days of the week, month or year. With an improved understanding of the changing nature of risks, we need to consider how we can best meet them with a more flexible approach.

Where? - Where should fire engines and specialist vehicles best be located to ensure we can provide the appropriate response to the full range of emergencies, whilst also providing an effective prevention service to the community?

Who? - Who is best-placed to respond to the local risks? We currently have full-time staff who work at a number of different stations in predominantly urban areas and on-call staff in more rural communities. Both provide emergency response, education and prevention activities. As risks in the county change, will we need to adapt our staffing arrangements to suit?

Section 4 - Operational assurance

The challenges we face when we send firefighters to emergency incidents is recognised by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) who said:

"they (the Fire Service) have to prepare individual employees to be able to make decisions in dangerous, fast-moving, emotionally charged and pressurised situations, even when there may sometimes be incomplete or inaccurate information about the incident;"

The HSE also stated that:

"many incidents firefighters face can develop at speed, some can develop in unexpected ways – and firefighters may, from time to time, be confronted with situations outside their experience;"

"they may not be able to control or mitigate some aspects of the working environment."

We agree with these statements but this does not mean that we adopt a 'cavalier approach' in emergency situations. We develop safe systems of work, continually train and assess our staff, and provide the best equipment and a high standard of personal protective equipment.

This approach means that operational assurance is considered in advance but has a big impact on our performance on the incident ground.

Our policies and procedures on training provide us with firefighters who are capable of completing their tasks competently and safely. The review of when, how, where and who train our staff will have a direct impact on our performance at an emergency situation.

Once we are at an emergency situation we have a responsibility to the public, our employees, other emergency responders and anyone who might be affected by our activities. We have developed standard approaches to managing incidents that have a track record of success in reducing risk. As each incident is unique, there is a great potential for learning. This might relate to the resource we send, our generic procedures for dealing with that incident type, the decision making of the officer in charge and the fire fighting actions of our crews.

To capture this learning and make sure we move forward, we actively monitor our performance at emergency incidents and training events. We review either specific incident types against the suggested actions and safe systems of work in our procedures, or the performance and decision making of the officer in charge against the expected standards. All staff that attend an emergency incident have the opportunity to feedback on their individual experiences and make suggestions for improved ways of working.

All of the information from our operational monitoring and staff feedback are reviewed and presented to our Emergency Response Manager, Health and Safety Manager and our Training Manager and action plans are created to plan any changes that are required.

Dealing with the most serious emergencies is a dangerous business and firefighters may be exposed to high levels of risks. In the UK, 15 firefighters have died while on duty since 2004. We are committed to keeping our workforce as safe as possible while maintaining a cost-effective emergency response service.

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Section 5 - How can you help?

Let us know what you think

We are keen to hear what you think of this plan, what you like and what you don't and any ideas you have to make Oxfordshire safer.

Visit our Oxfordshire Community Risk Management Plan page online.

Email us at…irmpteam@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Write to us at…

Oxfordshire Community Risk Management
Plan Consultation
Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters
Sterling Close
Kidlington
Oxfordshire
OX4 2NT

Become a firefighter!

What do firefighters do?

Our community relies on the skill and dedication of the men and women of our Fire and Rescue Service who work at your local fire station.

Figure 36: Charity car wash event involving firefighters and fire cadets

Figure 37: Routine maintenance of hydraulic rescue equipment

At any time of the day or night firefighters may be called upon to deal with a range of emergencies, including fires in houses or factories, flooding from rivers and river rescues, vehicle crashes on the motorway or country lanes, rescues of animals in great distress, chemical spillages at factories or on the roads, and other equally demanding and exacting incidents.

What do firefighters get out of it?

There are many benefits including:

- the opportunity to help your community in a direct practical way
- helping to prevent fires as part of our community safety programme
- being a highly-trained breathing apparatus wearer, emergency driver and qualified first aid worker
- reaping the rewards of working in a team
- being trained to a high standard and given the opportunity to lead teams in challenging situations
- being paid well for your service.

Retained Duty System (RDS) Firefighters

These are on-call firefighters who carry a pager and let the fire station know when they're available so they can respond immediately to emergency calls at any time. Many have an arrangement with their employer, so they can be on-call for the Fire and Rescue Service, while at the same time

remaining a valued employee. Others choose to devote only evenings and weekends to being on-call. They do the same job as whole time firefighters and receive regular training. RDS firefighters have to live or work within about five minutes of their local fire station in order to respond to call outs quickly. They are called out on average two or three times a week but the commitment varies around the county and between different fire stations. RDS Firefighters are an essential part of the Fire and Rescue Service. They serve both our urban and, even more so, our rural communities, responding to pagers when an emergency call is received.

Who can be a firefighter

To become a firefighter you must:

- have a real wish to support the local community
- have an enthusiasm and willingness to work in a team environment
- have a reasonable level of physical fitness
- be able to pass written entry tests
- be over 17 years and 10 months.

We welcome applications from all members of the community regardless of their age, gender identity, ethnic background, religion, life skills, physical ability or sexual orientation. We are particularly looking for more women and people from minority ethnic communities, as these groups are currently under represented.

Would you like to know more?

If you are interested in becoming a Firefighter, you can:

- Contact your nearest station and speak to the Station Manager to discuss your availability and determine your suitability.

- Fill in an online suitability questionnaire now at:
  www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/firecareers

- When you are ready call our firefighter recruitment hotline: 0800 5870 870

Support us

Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service has a long history of raising money for charity. Between 2002 and 2012 the Service raised over £2 million for both the Fire Fighters Charity and other local and national causes.

The Fire Fighters Charity is the UK's leading provider of services that enhance the quality of life for serving and retired fire service personnel and their families. They're available for all members of the fire service community, assisting thousands of individuals every year by providing pioneering treatment and support services.

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is at the very forefront of the Fire Fighters Charity, and consistently leads the way in terms of fundraising, often out-performing other larger brigades nationwide.

Figure 38: Charity collection for Children in Need

Over the last six years the amount we have raised locally has quadrupled, each year setting new records. In 2010-2011 Oxfordshire was the highest per capita fundraiser in the UK, bringing in a brigade

total of over £122,000 for the year, £17,500 up on the previous year.

It costs £9m every year to meet the needs of firefighters, and with no government funding, it is completely reliant upon donations from the general public and fire community.

If you would like to donate to this worthwhile charity then please visit the following website http://www.firefighterscharity.org.uk.

You can also donate by texting FIRX99 £1 (or other amount) to 70700 – Thank you!

Annex 1 - The 'Golden Thread'

				Core Legislation
Civil Contingencies Act 2004	The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005	The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004	Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974	

Oxfordshire 2030

Partnership Strategy for Oxfordshire

National Risk Register	**Corporate Plan** Oxfordshire County Council's Annual Plan	**National Framework** The Government Framework that English Fire and Rescue Services have to operate within
Thames Valley Community Risk Register	**Securing a Safer Oxfordshire**	
Oxfordshire Operational Risk Register	**365 Alive** OFRS' Strategic Aims	

Integrated Risk Management Planning

Community Risk Management Annual Report Risk, Performance and Governance	**Oxfordshire Community Risk Management Plan 2013 to 2018** Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue's 5 year community risk analysis (this document)	*Safer By Design* **Annual Business Plan** Community Protection Annual Action Plan plus Resource Planning

Area/Functional Plans

Appraisals

Individual Objectives and Development Plans

Key

■	National
■	Regional/ Partnership
■	County Council
■	Fire Service

Annex 2 - The 'safe person' concept

In normal health and safety management, the intent is to make the workplace safe, because this protects everyone – employees and the public. However, an operational incident is an inherently dangerous workplace with the potential for unpredictable risks to develop, which may be impossible to make completely safe. As a consequence, the Fire and Rescue Service must direct its efforts to keeping its firefighters as safe as is reasonably practicable, taking into account both the risks to the public and operational objectives of each emergency incident. This approach is known as the Safe Person Concept. There are two aspects to this concept - organisational responsibility and personal responsibility.

Figure 39: The Safe Person Concept

Organisational Responsibility

The organisation needs to provide the support necessary to enable its personnel to remain safe in a hostile environment.

This will include:

Selection/advancement

Because of the inherent dangers involved in dealing with emergency incidents, the fire & rescue service must endeavour to recruit and advance the people with the right skills and attributes to do the job. We will, therefore, continue to develop our recruitment and advancement processes - taking into account any regional or national guidance, where appropriate.

Risk information

Firefighters attend a variety of incidents – some of which are extremely complicated in nature and their risks. Therefore, we put in place measures to help manage and mitigate those risks, where it is reasonably practicable to do so, such as site specific risk information for high risk premises, which are made available to responding fire crews at the incident ground.

Personal protective equipment

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is regarded as the last resort to protect against risks to the health & safety of our personnel. We therefore ensure that we provide high quality PPE that is legally compliant, professionally managed and fit for purpose.

Equipment

The operational equipment carried on a fire appliance is varied and allows firefighters to tackle the wide range of incidents. We will continue to provide legally compliant, professionally managed and fit for purpose equipment designed to help reduce the risks to our firefighters.

Procedures

Because of the varied nature of the incidents that firefighters attend, we are committed to provide the appropriate tools to do the job safely and effectively. Operational procedures are just one of these tools and we have in place processes to produce, maintain, review and update these procedures, so that they are current and, where necessary, reflect regional or national guidance and best practice.

Command competence

Command and control is vital at an operational incident in order to bring it to a successful conclusion and maintain safe systems of work. We have in place operational commanders that are both highly competent at their relevant level within the Incident Command system and who maintain this competence as part of their development.

Instruction & training

Our overarching priority is to create safe systems of work and safe personnel through effective training and development. All personnel, uniformed and non-uniformed, in temporary or substantive roles, irrespective of their duty system, will undertake training and assessment appropriate to their role and will be required to demonstrate competency (measured against their role map and where appropriate National Occupational Standards).

We will endeavour, where possible, to ensure that learning and development is easily accessible and flexible, to meet the needs of personnel. We will achieve this by utilising different learning media, using a modular approach and working with other partners where appropriate.

Supervision

Because of the nature of the work that we undertake on a daily basis, we have put in place systems to support the appropriate supervision of operational staff. This is supplemented by utilising both active & reactive monitoring, in order to assess and maintain standards.

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Personal Responsibility

The individual must have the ability to make professional judgements about the appropriate use of available resources, in order to control the risks inherent in the unique circumstances of any emergency situation.

Every operational firefighter is therefore expected to exhibit the 6 attributes presented in Figure 27.

Figure 40: Personal Responsibility

Annex 3 – Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

The following summary is from our Fire Protection Policy Statements on the Discharge of Duties (references in brackets). These are our policy and procedure documents for enforcing the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

The principal aim of the Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Authority ("the Authority") is to make Oxfordshire a safer place by reducing as far as possible the risks and social and economic costs of fires and other dangers, without imposing unnecessary burden. Securing compliance with legal regulatory requirements is an important part of achieving this aim.

Our Enforcement Policy Statement is based on the principles of Better Regulation contained in **the Enforcement Concordat and Regulators Compliance Code** and sets out the approach the Authority will take in enforcing the legislation.

Our targeted approach means ensuring that regulatory effort is directed primarily towards those people and premises whose activities and/or set-up give rise to higher levels of risk to public/employee (relevant persons) safety, where the hazards and risks are less well controlled, or against deliberate offences. The Authority aims to make sure, through targeting, that the direction of regulatory effort takes into account the level of risk. Action will be primarily focused on those directly responsible for the risk and who are best placed to control it. The Authority has systems for prioritising regulatory effort. These include a **risk-based re-inspection programme** that adheres to national best practice and makes use of the outcomes of national fire data and societal life risk, as well as localised plans to identify high risk premises. Risk assessment, utilising methodology and data provided by Communities and Local Government, together with local data, intelligence and knowledge, underpins the Authority's approach to regulatory activity. The Authority will seek to identify relevant and good quality data to **continually improve its risk based audit and inspection programme.**

In addition, the Authority operates a **risk-based system of audit and inspection of premises**. This system utilises data and guidance from Communities and Local Government together with local intelligence and knowledge and incorporates local risk priorities identified from trends in location, types of fire and assessment of vulnerability of groups in local areas within Oxfordshire.

Audits and inspection will be undertaken by officers on the basis of our risk-based system, under which priority will be given to individual premises and generic premises types or uses that have been assessed as being of relatively higher risk. Currently, the standard re-inspection frequencies rate from six-monthly (Very High Risk) to five-yearly (Low Risk) or even sampling (Very low Risk), dependent on each risk assessment. However, greater audit and inspection effort can be allocated to premises where a compliance breach would pose a serious risk to the safety of relevant persons and/or the Authority has reason to believe that there is a high likelihood of non-compliance with the law.

The Authority's overall enforcement programme also takes account the need to sample small numbers of premises in relatively lower risk categories in order to continually test the methodology used.

Finally, the Authority will respond to allegations of fire risk in any premises for which they are the enforcing authority regardless of the relative risk level of the premises.

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Division(s): N/A

SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 NOVEMBER 2012

INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (IRMP) OXFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY - DRAFT ACTION PLAN 2013-14 AND UPDATE ON NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Report by the Chief Fire Officer

Introduction

1.   This report proposes a number of projects to be included within the Fire Authority's Integrated Risk Management Action Plan (IRMP) for the fiscal year 2013-14.   The proposals summarise areas where the Service's Senior Leadership Team believe service improvements may be achieved. To meet the requirements of the IRMP process, each proposal is supported by evidence validating both their inclusion and their contribution to improved community engagement and community/firefighter safety.   Similarly, each proposal recognises the prevailing economic constraints.

2.   These proposals, if approved by the Cabinet Member for Safer & Stronger Communities, will be adopted in the final version of the IRMP Action Plan 2013-14 subject to further consultation & scrutiny. Each project will be subject to close monitoring, reviewed every quarter and reported to the Cabinet Member responsible for Safer & Stronger Communities.

3.   The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 received Royal Assent on 22 July 2004. Part 3, Chapter 21 of this legislation requires the Secretary of State to prepare a Fire and Rescue National Framework to which Fire Authorities must have regard when discharging their functions.

4.   The Secretary of State published the latest Fire and Rescue National Framework in July 2012.   The purpose of the Framework is to provide strategic direction from central government whilst ensuring that authorities continue to make local decisions. The Framework set out the Government's objectives for the Fire and Rescue Service and what Fire and Rescue Authorities should do to achieve these objectives.   The 2012 National Framework has changed the focus of national priorities away from areas such as Regional Management Boards, Equality and Diversity, Workforce Development and Asset management and moved, instead, towards the demonstration and delivery of FRS strategies for prevention, protection and response, which includes the publication of key performance data, such as response standards – as part of the wider public sector accountability and transparency agenda. There is also a strong focus on maintaining and developing national resilience assets which can be called upon for major incidents or terrorist attacks anywhere in the country – as well as improving

the working relationships with neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services (Intraoperability) and other emergency services (Interoperabitily). Having said this, the latest version of the Framework document also continues to make clear that the use of Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) will still be the key tool to determine the need for and allocation of local fire prevention, protection and response resources - to allow local decisions to be made by practitioners and elected members on the basis of locally assessed risks and circumstances.

5. The 2012 Fire and Rescue National Framework requires each Fire and Rescue Authority to produce a publicly available IRMP covering at least a three-year time span which:

- Is regularly reviewed and revised and reflects up-to-date risk information and evaluation of service delivery outcomes
- Has regard to the risk analyses completed by Local and Regional Resilience Forums including those reported in external Community Risk Registers (CRRs) and internal risk registers, to ensure that civil and terrorist contingencies are captured in their IRMP
- Reflects effective consultation during its development and at all review stages with representatives of all sections of the community and stakeholders
- Demonstrates how prevention, protection and response activities will be best used to mitigate the impact of risk on communities in a cost effective way
- Provides details of how Fire and Rescue Authorities deliver their objectives and meet the needs of communities through working with partners
- Has undergone an effective equality impact assessment process.

6. Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority is in the process of publishing its latest strategic IRMP in April 2013 providing the strategic direction for the next five years. This document will be subject to annual review and updated and amended as required. This draft annual action plan 2013-14 will be the first one to be linked to the new strategic IRMP.

7. The projects that have been proposed for the action plan 2013-14 will be subject to consultation for 12 weeks starting on the 12th November 2012. During this period, Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Authority will consult with neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services, partner organisations such as the Highways Agency and the Environment Agency, the Fire Brigades Union, Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue staff (uniformed and non-uniformed) and members of the public.

8. The Senior Management team from Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service will respond to the comments made during the consultation period and the responses will be made available to Cabinet in the final report in 2013 and published on the internet for public access.

9. The following items summarise the projects for inclusion in the IRMP Action Plan for the fiscal year 2013-14:

- **Project 1: Implement the Service's Road Safety strategy as an integral part of its prevention and protection activities**

  Responsible Manager: Area Manager – Safety

  Objective: Now that the County Council's Road Safety Team have moved into the Fire and Rescue Service, there is a need to develop and integrate their education programmes, initiatives and resources within the wider established home and commercial safety work activities of the Service.
  Outcome: To provide an improved and targeted range of safety services for Oxfordshire residents, businesses and commuters, which continues to drive down accidents and injuries in the home, at work and on the roads.

- **Project 2: Implement opportunities for technological advancements - following a review of fleet, equipment and working practices - to further support and enhance public and firefighter safety**

  Responsible Manager: Area Manager - Service Support

  Objective: Following recent firefighter fatalities in both warehouse and high rise building fires – coupled with the continuing need to drive down the number and severity of accidents and injuries across the county's homes, at work and on our roads, the research and implementation of new equipment and approaches is seen as a key driver to help continually improving our service provision.
  Outcome: To continue to reduce the number and severity of injuries to both the public and firefighters, as well as reduce the damage to property from fires and other emergencies.

- **Project 3: Review and revise the Service's Learning and Development strategy to further support and enhance public and firefighter safety**

  Responsible Manager: Area Manager - Service Support

  Objective: As the scope of the Service's response to emergencies expands to incorporate more specialist rescue activities as well as becoming more complex as a result of the latest developments in both building and vehicle design / construction, the need to keep firefighters appropriately equipped and trained is paramount.
  Outcome: To continue to provide 'fit-for-purpose' training for our firefighters, based on the emergency incidents they are expected to respond to.

- **Project 4: Deliver the Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) programme**

  Responsible Manager: Deputy Chief Fire Officer

  Objective: With both Fire & Rescue Authorities' (Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire) decisions to formally collaborate on the creation of a combined Control Service being agreed, the programme to deliver it by April 2014 needs to be undertaken

Outcome: To provide the new Service in line with the programme delivery plan and expectations, in partnership with Royal Berkshire FRA.

- **Project 5: Implement further collaborative opportunities with other Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum (TVLRF) Category 1 & 2 responders and align working practices to improve our provision of multi-agency prevention, protection and response services**

  Responsible Manager: Area Manager - Operations and Resilience

  Objective: Developing on from the success of the collaborative working and pre-planning in the run-up to and during the 2012 Olympics and Paralymplics, capitalise on the networks, training and agreed joint-working activities to further improve our service provision, particularly in relation to major incidents.
  Outcome: To develop and make use of a framework for on-going service improvements in the context of the working with neighbouring Fire & Rescue Services as well as other key local partners, as defined by the Civil Contingencies Act (2004).

- **Project 6: Review and revise the Service's strategy for the effective management of operational incidents in order to further support and enhance public and firefighter safety**

  Responsible Manager: Area Manager - Operations and Resilience

  Objective: Following on from the Service's 2012/13 IRMP project relating to incident command and worse case planning assumptions, there is a need to incorporate the research and findings into the Service's new ways of working, taking into account the outcomes of this action plan's Projects 2,3,4 & 5.
  Outcome: The operational and safety aspects of emergency response will continue to improve, even against the backdrop of increasing scope and complexity.

Financial and Staff Implications

10. Each project will fully recognise the prevailing economic constraints, delivering efficiencies or allowing existing/additional services to be delivered more effectively.

   RECOMMENDATION

11. The Scrutiny Committee is asked to endorse the project options highlighted in the 2013-2014 IRMP Action Plan and support full public consultation on the proposals

Dave Etheridge
Chief Fire Officer

Contact Officer: Nathan Travis Tel: (01865) 855206

October 2012

Division(s): ALL

SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
12 November 2012

FIRE & RESCUE – RESPONSE STANDARDS PERFORMANCE
2011/12

Report by the Chief Fire Officer

Introduction

1. Since April 2005 Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service has had local Response Standards for attending emergency incidents in the county. Cabinet approved these standards on 22 June 2006). Additionally, the Chief Fire Officer was required to report annually on the Fire &Rescue Service's performance against these standards and bring forward any recommendations as appropriate

Response Standards

2. Local Response Standards are as follows:

   o 80% of all emergency incidents will be responded to within 11 minutes
   o 95% of all emergency incidents will be responded to within 14 minutes

3. The above is measured by the time it takes to get the first fire appliance to the scene from the time at which the fire station is first alerted.

4. In addition to the Response Targets for the first attending appliance, the Fire & Rescue Service will send a sufficient number of vehicles and personnel to safely and effectively deal with the type of incident reported as determined by national and local risk assessments.

2011/12 Performance – Response Standards - Monthly Summary

Response Standards monthly summary April 2011 - March 2012				
Quarter 2011/12	Total emergency incidents in scope	Incidents responded to <11mins	% response standards <11mins	Incidents responded to <14mins	% response standards <14mins
April-June	864	726	84%	817	95%
July -Sep	971	792	82%	910	94%
Oct - Dec	867	690	80%	804	93%
Jan-March	938	713	76%	857	91%
Totals	3640	2921	80.5	3388	93.25

Factors potential affecting performance and risk mitigation

5. Travel Traffic management schemes, increased traffic levels and the introduction of more widespread reduced speed limits, have meant that Fire Appliances are required to proceed at a reduced speed. As a result of the changes we reviewed our attendances to ensure that the vehicle sent to an incident would deliver the swiftest response.

6. The access to the motorway is limited via the junctions within the County and the travel distance is dictated by where an incident is in relation to the junction. This has a direct impact on the attendance times for stations that respond to or via the motorway. We have demonstrated an improvement in our attendance times to incidents within 11 minutes, from 79.59% in 2010/11 to 80.5% in 2011/12, thus meeting our target by using the most effective appliance for each incident.

7. The ultimate aim is to utilise an Automatic Vehicle Location System to ensure that we have comprehensive information regarding the precise location of a fire appliance and can mobilise the nearest every time, even when appliances are moving through the County. It is anticipated that this system will be in place by late 2014.

     Call clarifying:- Control now tends to ask more questions of the caller to assess the risk and the attendance required.

     Drive to arrive policies:- OFRS drivers are required to modify their driving dependent upon the risk to ensure that their attendance is made in a safe and controlled manner, without endangering other road users.

     Safety Policies:- all personnel are required to wear full personal protective equipment (PPE) prior to leaving the station. This has added a short delay, but ensures additional safety en route and the ability to deploy more quickly once in attendance.

     Weather - Following two recent severe winters and a significant flooding event we have learned many lessons and we have well- rehearsed procedures that are adopted for severe weather events. To date we have ensured a response to all life threatening incidents during these periods of disruption, and offered additional support to other OCC critical services where resources have allowed.

8. The Senior Leadership Team receive a quarterly performance review of the performance against the agreed response times, with the data being analysed to establish the reason behind any under- performance.

9. Our Response Targets remain stretching. However, we have achieved a 0.66% improvement in the 11 minute attendance time from last year's performance and a 0.57% improvement in the 14 minute attendance time).

10. The introduction of officers to encourage the recruitment and retention of retained (part-time) crews is having a continued positive effect on r availability, meaning that the nearest appliance is more likely to be available.

RECOMMENDATION

11. **The Scrutiny Committee is RECOMMENDED to note the performance information contained in this paper and the actions taken to develop the service.**

DAVID ETHERIDGE
Chief Fire Officer

Background Papers: Breakdown by district, area and station

Contact Officer: Nigel Wilson, Operations & Resilience Manager, Tel: (01865) 852171)

Annex 1 – Breakdown of response standards for 2011/12 by District and Area

Districts	Total emergency incidents in scope	Incidents responded to <11mins	% response standards <11mins	Incidents responded to <14mins	% response standards <14mins
City	1297	1242	95.76	1287	99.23
West	448	311	69.42	412	91.96
Cherwell	838	634	75.66	757	90.33
South	647	429	66.31	564	87.17
Vale	410	305	74.39	368	89.76

Areas	Total emergency incidents in scope	Incidents responded to <11mins	% response standards <11mins	Incidents responded to <14mins	% response standards <14mins
City	1390	1302	93.67	1376	98.99
South Vale	1057	734	69.44	932	88.17
West Cherwell	1193	885	74.18	1080	90.53

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service
Response Standards
### Monthly Performance against Response Standards 2011/12
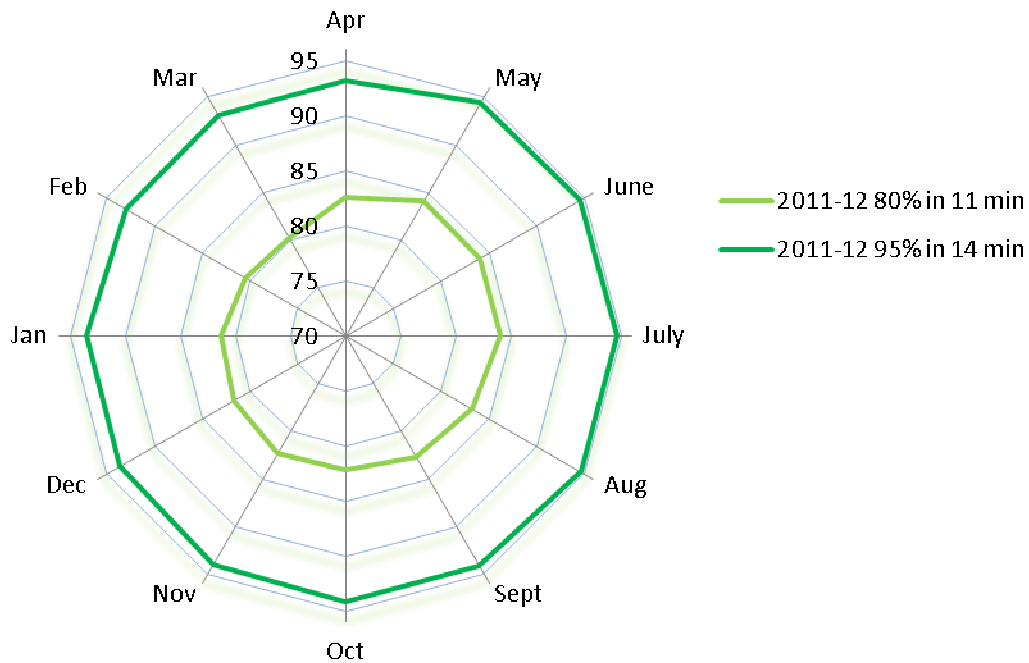
Legend:
- 2011-12 80% in 11 min
- 2011-12 95% in 14 min

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service
Response Standards
Monthly Performance against Response Standards 2010/11

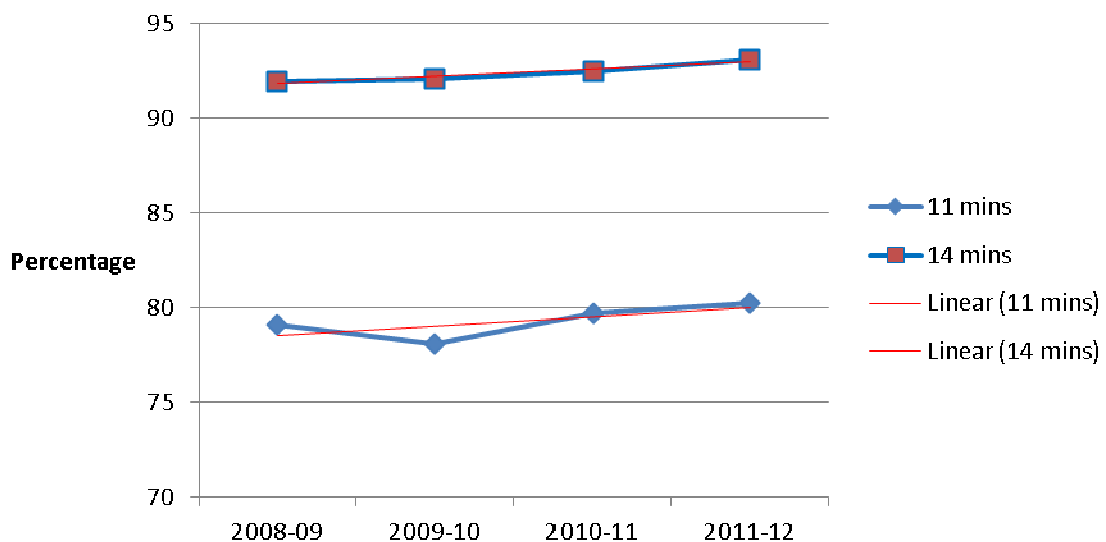Legend:
- 2010-11 80% in 11 min
- 2010-11 95% in 14 min
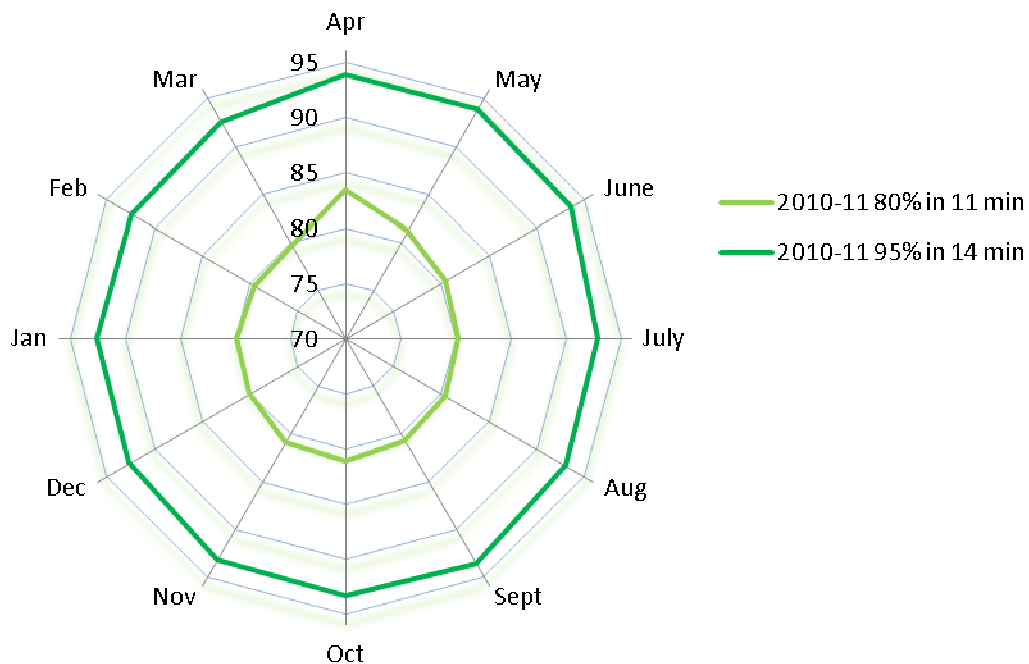
Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service Response Standards

Monthly Performance against Response Standards 2010/11 and 2011/12
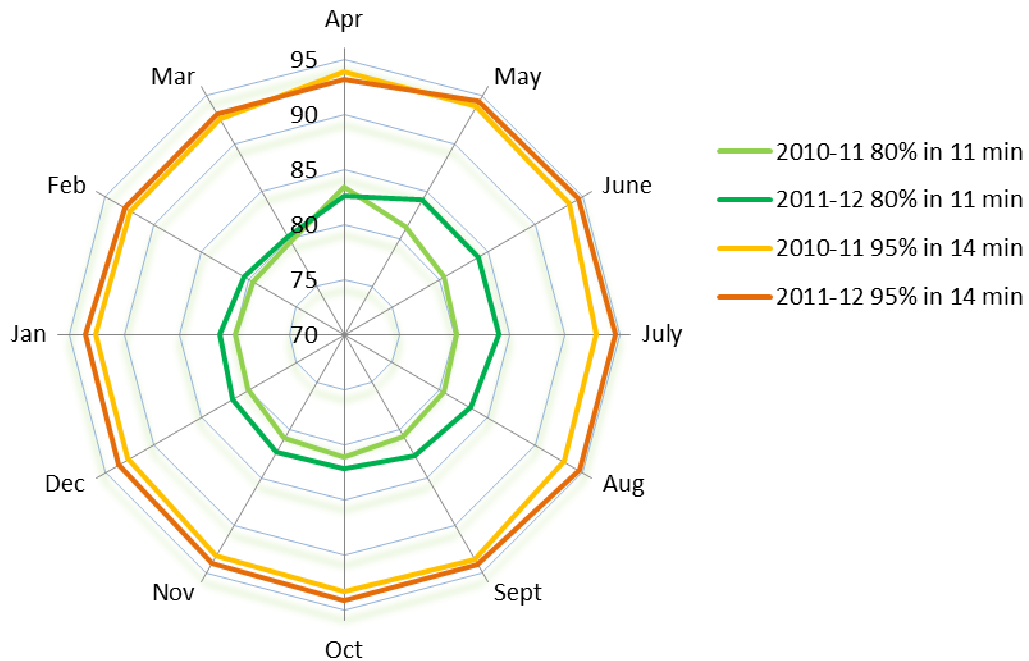
The Graph above compares the last 2 years Response Standards indicating the improvement that has been made. The figures are the accumulative throughout the year.

Annex 2 - Historical Data 2010/11

Area	Incidents in Scope	Number in 11 minutes	% in 11 minutes	Number in 14 minutes	% in 14 minutes
City	1345.00	1261.00	93.75	1323.00	98.36
West	395.00	293.00	74.18	366.00	92.66
Cherwell	865.00	639.00	73.87	764.00	88.32
South	720.00	493.00	68.47	636.00	88.33
Vale	399.00	278.00	69.67	356.00	89.22

Area	Incidents in Scope	Number in 11 minutes	% in 11 minutes	Number in 14 minutes	% in 14 minutes
City	1345.00	1261.00	93.75	1323.00	98.36
West/Cherwell	1260.00	932.00	73.97	1130.00	89.68
South/Vale	1119.00	771.00	68.90	992.00	88.65

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Division(s): All

SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
12TH November 2012

Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act Update and Revised Policy

Report by the County Solicitor & Head of Law and Governance

Introduction

1. The use of covert investigatory techniques, such as surveillance on an individual or a premises or accessing records of the use of a telephone number, is sometimes necessary for the effective detection or prevention of crime. However, by their nature such actions impinge on human rights, particularly the right to a private and family life.

2. The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) provides the legislative framework governing the use of covert investigatory techniques by public authorities. Compliance with the requirements of this Act when carrying out such activities ensures that the actions are lawful. In broad terms, the Act requires the activity to be authorised by an appropriate, senior officer. In considering an application to conduct an activity which falls within the scope of the Act the authorising officer must be satisfied that the activity is necessary for one of a limited range of purposes and to be proportionate to what it seeks to achieve.

3. In response to adverse media reports on the use of surveillance by local authorities the Government has amended RIPA to introduce further controls. This paper outlines these new controls and the implications for the Council. The revised RIPA policy is also included for comment.

Exempt Information

4. None

Types of Covert Investigatory Techniques

5. There are three types of covert investigatory techniques.
   a. Directed surveillance. The covert observation, recording or monitoring of a person, persons or location in a way that is likely to result in the obtaining of private information.
   b. Use of a covert human intelligence source. Establishing a relationship with someone in order to covertly obtain information from that person.
   c. Obtaining and disclosing communications data (e.g. the name and address of the user of a telephone number or e-mail address).

6.   RIPA does not allow the use of any other covert techniques by local authorities to be authorised. In particular it does not allow the use of 'intrusive' surveillance, namely surveillance carried out in relation to residential premises.

7.   To undertake any activity within the scope of RIPA a senior officer must consider and authorise the activity. Before any of these techniques can be authorised the authorising officer must be satisfied that the activity is necessary for the purpose of prevention or detection of crime and that the actual activity is proportionate to what it seeks to achieve (this involves balancing the level of intrusion with the need for the operation or activity taking account of the seriousness of the issue and other means to obtain the information that is sought).

The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012

8.   The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 introduces two new controls on the use of covert investigatory techniques by local authorities.

9.   **Approval of Local Authority Authorisations under RIPA by a Justice of the Peace.** From 1st November 2012 local authority authorisations under RIPA for the use of particular covert techniques can only be given effect once an order approving the authorisation or notice has been granted by a Justice of the Peace.

10.   **Directed surveillance crime threshold.** A local authority can now only grant an authorisation under RIPA for the use of directed surveillance where the local authority is investigating particular types of criminal offences. These are criminal offences which attract a maximum custodial sentence of six months or more or criminal offences relating to the underage sale of alcohol or tobacco.

Implications for Oxfordshire County Council

11.   All authorisations granted by Oxfordshire County Council under RIPA in recent years would have met the serious crime threshold. Therefore, in practice this new threshold will not limit the normal functions of the authority. If it is considered necessary to carry out an activity which would normally be authorised under RIPA in relation to a crime which does not meet this threshold, then the fact that the action cannot be authorised under RIPA does not prohibit us from carrying out the activity. However, we will be doing so without the protection of the RIPA framework and therefore additional care is required. The revised RIPA policy makes it clear that such activities must still be authorised by one of the senior officers that authorise activities under RIPA and that specific advice must be sought from the County Solicitor.

12.   The judicial approval process will require additional steps to be taken before activities can commence. An application will need to be made to the Magistrates Court each time an internal authorisation is granted where the activity falls within the scope of RIPA. The investigating officer in the case will

need to attend the court and provide material to the Magistrates so that they can decide whether to grant an order approving the internal authorisation. It should be noted that judicial approval is not required where the surveillance is required urgently (e.g. when the officer needs to respond immediately to events or where the timescale makes it impractical to seek approval given the limited time between us becoming aware that the activity is required and the time at which the activity must be carried out).

13.   Provided the internal authorisation was granted with due consideration of the necessity and proportionality of the activity, then the judicial review process should not limit our activities.

14.   We have met with the Magistrates Court Manager and agreed the process to be followed when applying for judicial approval. A briefing note has been provided for Magistrates.

Policy

15.   The Council's RIPA policy has been revised to reflect the new requirements. A copy of the revised policy is annexed to this report for the committee's review.

Recommendation

16.   The Committee is asked to note the changes to the RIPA regime and their implications and to review and comment on the revised RIPA Policy.

NAME: Peter Clark, County Solicitor & Head of Law and Governance

Background papers: None
Contact Officer: Richard Webb, Acting Head of Trading Standards and Community Safety

October 2012

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POLICY ON COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 (RIPA)

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk
Working for you

1   Introduction

1.1   Part II of this Act came into effect on 25 September 2000 and regulates the use of covert surveillance activities by Local Authorities. Special authorisation arrangements need to be put in place whenever the Local Authority considers commencing a covert surveillance or obtaining information by the use of informants or officers acting in an undercover capacity.

1.2   Local Authorities do operate covert activities in a number of key areas. Activities can include covert surveillance in relation to internal audit and personnel where fraud, deception or gross misconduct by staff might be suspected. The legal requirements are now supplemented by codes of practice issued by the Home Office for certain surveillance activities, (covert surveillance activity and covert human intelligence sources) breaches of which can be cited in Court as evidence of failure to abide by the requirements of RIPA. This may mean that the evidence obtained by that surveillance is excluded.

1.3   The Council policy is that specific authorisation is required for any covert surveillance investigation. There are only a small number of authorising Officers who can give this permission and these are as follows:
- County Solicitor
- Designated authorising officer – Trading Standards

Before authorisation it will normally be necessary to consult with the relevant Deputy Director/Head of Service.

1.4   Before seeking authorisation you should discuss the matter with your Line Manager.

1.5   This Policy applies to all services except Trading Standards who have their own specific internal Service procedures for dealing with authorisations. However, copies of all authorisations including those for Trading Standards will be forwarded to the County Solicitor for retention in a central register, and Trading Standards will simply be exempt from the provisions of this policy concerning prior authorisation.

2   Definitions

Surveillance – includes monitoring, observing or listening to persons, their movements, conversations or other activities and communications. It may be conducted with or without the assistance of a surveillance device and includes the recording of any information obtained.

Covert Surveillance – This is carried out to ensure the person who is the subject of the surveillance is unaware that it is or may be taking place. The provisions of RIPA apply to the following forms of covert surveillance:

(a) **Directed Surveillance** – is covert but not intrusive, is undertaken for the purposes of a specific investigation which is likely to result in the obtaining of private

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information about a person (targeted or otherwise) e.g. checking staff are making claimed visits, time spent etc.

(b) **Intrusive Surveillance** - Local authorities may not use hidden officers or concealed surveillance devices within a person's home or vehicle in order to directly observe that person.[1]

(c) **Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS)** – This is an undercover operation whereby an informant or undercover officer establishes or maintains some sort of relationship with the person in order to obtain private information e.g. test purchasing, telephone calls where the identity of the caller is withheld.

Deputy Director/Head of Service – this also includes Business Managers and those authorised to act on behalf of the Deputy Director/Head of Service as set out in clause 7.4.

3   RIPA Requirements

3.1 Directed surveillance only falls within the scope of the RIPA if it meets one of the following tests-
a) The offence the activity seeks to prevent or detect is punishable by imprisonment for a period of at least 6 months or more, or
b) The activity is related to the prevention or detection of offences concerning the supply of alcohol or tobacco to persons under 18 years of age.
Directed surveillance that does not meet one of these tests will fall outside the scope of the RIPA. In this instance specific authorisation must be sought from the Head of Law and Culture before the activity can take place.

3.2   Basically directed surveillance must be authorised prior to it taking place, be subject to regular review and must be shown to be necessary and proportionate. RIPA does not enable a local authority to make any authorisations to carry out intrusive surveillance.

3.3   All non-intrusive covert surveillance and CHIS requires prior authorisation by the appropriate Local Authority Officer (as set out in this policy) before any surveillance activity takes place. The only exception to this is where covert surveillance is undertaken by way of an immediate response to events that means it was not foreseeable and not practical to obtain prior authorisation.

3.4 From 1st November 2012 Judicial approval is also required before any internal authorisations given under the Act take effect. Once internal authorisation has been granted a specific application to the Magistrates Court will be required.

3.5 There is no direct sanction against Local Authorities within the Act for failing to seek or obtain authorisation within the organisation for surveillance, nevertheless such activity by its nature is an interference of a person's right to a private and family life guaranteed under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Investigatory Powers Tribunal is able to investigate complaints from anyone who feels aggrieved by a public authority's exercise of its powers under RIPA.

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[1] The Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Extension of Authorisation Provisions: Legal Consultations) Order 2010 [the 2010 Order] provides that directed surveillance carried out in certain premises (e.g. prisons, law firms, police stations) used for the purpose of legal consultations also amount to intrusive surveillance.

3.6 The consequences of not obtaining authorisation and Judicial approval may mean that the action is unlawful by virtue of Section 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998 i.e. a failure by the Authority to conduct this work in accordance with human rights conventions. Obtaining authorisation will ensure the Local Authority's actions are carried out in accordance with the law and satisfy the stringent and necessary safeguards against abuse.

4　Grounds of Necessity

The authorisation by itself does not ensure lawfulness, as it is necessary also to demonstrate that the interference was justified as both necessary and proportionate. **The statutory grounds of necessity must apply for the purposes of preventing or detecting crime or of preventing disorder.**

5　Proportionality

5.1　Once a ground for necessity is demonstrated, the person granting the authorisation must also believe that the use of an intelligence source or surveillance is proportionate, to what is aimed to be achieved by the conduct and use of that source or surveillance. This involves balancing the intrusive nature of the investigation or operation and the impact on the target or others who might be affected by it against the need for the information to be used in operational terms. Other less intrusive options should be considered and evaluated. All RIPA investigations or operations are intrusive and should be carefully managed to meet the objective in question and must not be used in an arbitrary or unfair way.

5.2　An application for an authorisation should include an assessment of the risk of any collateral intrusion i.e. the risk of intrusion into the privacy of persons other than those directly targeted by the operation. Measures should be taken wherever practicable to avoid unnecessary intrusion into the lives of those not directly connected with the operation.

6　Confidential Material

Where an investigation may reveal sensitive and confidential material this requires special authorisation by the Chief Executive or his/her delegated Authorising Officer (Assistant Chief Executive).

7　Implementation Procedure

7.1　Deputy Directors/Heads of Service shall be responsible for seeking authorisation for surveillance. They have operational responsibility for ensuring compliance with the requirements of RIPA and Home Office Codes of Practice (Covert Surveillance/Covert Human Intelligence Services, which can be downloaded from the following link http://homeoffice.gov.uk/counter-terrorism/) in relation to covert surveillance and covert human intelligence source for their service.

7.2　All applications for authorisation and authorisations must be made in accordance with the procedure and on the appropriate forms: (download forms from the links below)

RIPA Form 1 –   [Authorisation Directed Surveillance](#)
RIPA Form 2 –   [Review of a Directed Surveillance Authorisation](#)
RIPA Form 3 –   [Renewal of a Directed Surveillance Authorisation](#)
RIPA Form 4 –   [Cancellation of a Directed Surveillance Authorisation](#)
RIPA Form 5 –   [Application for Authorisation of the conduct or use of a Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS)](#)
RIPA Form 6 –   [Review of a Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS) Authorisation](#)
RIPA Form 7 –   [Application for renewal of a Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS) Authorisation](#)
RIPA Form 8 –   [Cancellation of an Authorisation for the use or conduct of a Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS)](#)
RIPA Form 9 –   [Application request for Communications Data](#)

RIPA Form 10- Application for an Judicial Order Form

7.3   All requests for authorisation must be forwarded to the County Solicitor who will maintain a central record for inspection. The County Solicitor will monitor the central register periodically and produce an annual report to CCMT. Renewal of authorisations will be for 3 months and cancellation of authorisations should be requested as soon as possible i.e. as soon as the surveillance is no longer considered necessary. Judicial approval is required for the renewal of an authorisation but it is not required for any internal review or cancellation.

7.4   The Authorising Officers may authorise a person to act in their absence, the substitute will be a Senior Manager and who will have overall management responsibility for the operation/investigation. A list of all current named Authorising Officers and named substitutes will be included in the central register and appended to this Policy (Appendix 1). The County Solicitor will approve all proposed Authorising Officers for inclusion in a central register. The annual report to CCMT will also include a review of the appropriate designated Authorising Officers.

7.5   All Managers have responsibility for ensuring that they have sufficient understanding to recognise when an investigation or operation falls within the requirements of RIPA. Authorising Officers will keep up to date with developments in the law and best practice relating to RIPA.

7.6   Authorising Officers must ensure full compliance with the RIPA Authorisation Procedure set out in the appropriate forms in 7.2 above.

7.7   Authorising Officers and Deputy Directors/Heads of Service will co-operate fully with any inspection arranged by the Office of Surveillance Commissioners.

7.8   RIPA Coordinator (Trading Standards and Community Safety Manager)

The role of the RIPA coordinator is to have day-to-day oversight of all RIPA authorisations and maintain a central register of all authorisations, review dates, cancellations and renewals.

All forms should be passed through the coordinator to ensure that there is a complete record of all authorisations, contents of the forms will be monitored to

ensure they are correctly filled in and the coordinator will supply quarterly statistics to the Senior Responsible Officer (County Solicitor/Monitoring Officer).

The Coordinator will also monitor training requirements and organise training for new staff as appropriate, and ensure continued awareness of RIPA throughout the council via staff information on the Council's Intranet.

8   Communications Data

8.1   Part I of RIPA sets out these requirements. The Council can access certain communications data only "for the purpose of preventing or detecting crime or of preventing disorder". The exception to this is for the Fire Control Officer in an emergency for the purposes of preventing death or injury.

Despite what some commentators claim the Council does not have an automatic legal right to intercept (i.e. "bug") phones or listen into other people's telephone conversations. The primary power the Council has is to obtain certain details (e.g. name and address) of a telephone subscriber from communication service providers (CSP) such as: BT, Vodafone, Orange etc.

Monitoring of calls may be necessary for legitimate employment purposes but will be subject to the same authorisation requirements as set out in this policy.

8.2   The applications to obtain communications data, other than for the prevention of death or injury as in 8.1 above, must be made by a Home Office designated "Single Point of Contact (SPOC)". Arrangements are in place to enable the authority to access communications data via a third party "SPOC". Requests must be forwarded to the Trading Standards and Community Safety Manager who will consult with the relevant Deputy Director/Head of Service. If the Trading Standards and Community Safety Manager agrees the request is within the scope of RIPA he will make arrangements for the request to be processed via the SPOC.

8.3   The concept of the "SPOC" has been agreed between the Home Office and the CSP and introduces a verification process to ensure that only data entitled to be obtained is so obtained. Judicial approval of the application is required and the SPOC will not obtain any communications data without evidence of judicial approval.

9   Briefings

The County Solicitor will provide updates on the RIPA law and best practice but Deputy Directors/Heads of Service and other Managers must be able to recognise potential RIPA situations.

10   Conclusion

The benefit of having a clear and regulated system of authorising all covert activities is self-evident. Surveillance by its very nature is intrusive and therefore should be subject to appropriate scrutiny at the highest level and the authorisation procedure requires that the reasons for the decision are specifically and clearly set out and the

basis for the decision is readily accessible and understood. Completion of appropriate authorisations also means that in reaching a decision alternative options will also have been fully explored. Proper compliance with the procedure and properly recorded authorisations are the best defence should any of our investigations be challenged.

11 Review of Authorisations and Policy

The Council's "Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee" will review:

- all authorised RIPA applications quarterly; and
- receive an annual report from the County Solicitor on the operation of the Policy; and
- review the policy annually to ensure it remains compliant with current legislation, relevant codes of practice and continue to meet the responsibilities of the council.

Senior Responsible Officer:	County Solicitor and Monitoring Officer
RIPA Coordinator:	Trading Standards and Community Safety Manager
Date:	November 2012
Next Review Date:	November 2013

Appendix 1 – Authorising Officers and Named Substitutes

*Authorising Officer – Peter G Clark County Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

*Named Substitute – Sue Scane Assistant Chief Executive/Chief Finance Officer

Authorising Officer – Richard Webb, Trading Standards and Community Safety Manager

**Confidential Material Special Authorisation – Joanna Simons Chief Executive

**Named Substitute – Sue Scane Assistant Chief Executive/Chief Finance Officer

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Division(s): All

SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 12TH NOVEMBER 2012

The Citizens Advice Consumer Service

Report by Director for Social and Community Services

Introduction

1. In 2005 central government, via the Office of Fair Trading, contracted for a national service which would provide self- help consumer advice and act as a reporting site where consumers would be able to provide information about problem traders. The Service was called Consumer Direct. As well as providing advice to consumers, it also passed to Trading Standards Services intelligence about possible criminal activity by traders and the contact details of consumers needing extra assistance.

2. In 2009, Oxfordshire County Council made the decision that it would reduce its in-house consumer advice service provided by Trading Standards and formally link up with Consumer Direct from April 2012. In 2010 central government decided to transfer responsibility for the Consumer Direct service to Citizens Advice. This change and our own, formal, partnership with the national service both took place in April 2012. While Citizens Advice is new to this contract, it has engaged Agilisys, one of the previous providers of Consumer Direct call centres to deliver the service. The Service has been rebranded as the Citizens Advice Consumer Service.

3. This report summarises the engagement between Oxfordshire County Council Trading Standards Service and the Citizens Advice Consumer Service.

Exempt Information

4. None

Cooperation between Local Trading Standards Services and the National Citizens Advice Service

5. Citizens Advice work closely with local Trading Standards Services in respect of the provision of the Consumer Service. Each Local Authority provides Citizens Advice with a Protocol. This document is basically an agreement as to what we will and will not accept as case referrals, and what expectations can be given by Citizens Advice to a consumer about the time scale and nature of service they will receive from each local Trading Standards Service.

6. There are more than 200 Trading Standards Services and each has its own bespoke Protocol. The Citizens Advice Service also refers clients to hundreds

of the organisations, each of which has its own Protocol. Compliance with all of these, very disparate, protocols has been identified as a problem by the Citizens Advice Service.

7.   A working group between Citizens Advice and Trading Standards was established in 2011. Kate Davies, a team leader in Oxfordshire Trading Standards Service who had overseen the transition to the new national service, joined that working group in September 2012. This has already proved to be a valuable means of keeping abreast of how other Trading Standards Services are finding the new relationship and of how the new service is performing.

8.   In addition, there is also a feedback mechanism for daily use which allows us to inform Citizens Advice of any problems with specific cases and get problems resolved.

Oversight and Quality Assurance

9.   Citizens Advice has a contractual relationship with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) to provide the National Consumer Service. This contract includes Key Performance Indicators, some of which were relaxed for the first 6 months of the contract. Citizens Advice passes these performance indicators on to its own contractor, Agilisys, which actually runs the call centres providing the service.

10.   By the end of September, demand for the national service was about 96% of that forecast. It has not been advertised or otherwise promoted. It retains the Consumer direct telephone number but its web content is now at the national Citizens Advice website: www.adviceguide.org

11.   Citizens Advice carries out monthly reviews with Agilisys and quarterly audits. It reports that to September 2012:
- 70% of calls answered within 60 seconds (meets relaxed KPI)
- At least 80% of online requests for advice answered within 2 days (Q1) and at least 95% answered within 2 days (Q2) (meets relaxed KPI)
- 6% of telephone calls abandoned (meets relaxed KPI)
- Call handling time average 8 minutes 26 seconds (not subject to a KPI)
- Service availability 100% (meets KPI)

12.   One of the relaxed key performance indicators is that 70% of business partners (including Trading Standards Services) should be satisfied with the service. This was suspended until the end of September 2012 so no review of this indicator has taken place.

13.   However, in response to some concerns raised by Trading Standards Services, a quality review exercise was undertaken across a number of Authorities during the summer. This review was quite rough and ready but it found that:
- 65% of the surveyed referrals from Citizens Advice were of acceptable quality

- 21% contained some problems
- 13% were not of acceptable quality.

14. Oxfordshire was not one of the authorities involved in the review but, our experience, broadly, tallies with its findings. Everyone at the working group meeting in September agreed that this data collection and review exercise had been useful and agreed to repeat it next year, alongside Citizens Advice's own partner satisfaction surveys.

How we deal with problem referrals in Oxfordshire

15. Citizens Advice provides a feedback system. If we find a referral which is incorrect in some way, we complete a form explaining the problem and email it back to Citizens Advice. We do not keep a record of the number of referrals which require feedback but, in all but one case, we have been satisfied with the timeliness of Citizens Advice's response to the feedback. Feedback can call for additional action by Citizens Advice or can just be for information to help improve their service.

Service Improvement

16. At the working group meeting in September, Citizens Advice was very honest about the difficulties it has faced, including the number of protocols with which it has to deal and staff training / retention problems. It said that in the 2nd quarter (July to September) it had focussed on quality improvement. It had increased it monitoring of its advisors and is targeting the following areas:
- Additional targeted questioning of callers
- Completeness of advice provided
- Accuracy and clarity of data recorded
- Correct use and application of Trading Standards referral Protocols
- Accurate classification of cases as either "referrals" or "notifications"
- Managing consumers' expectations

17. In addition, 19 new advisors began work in September, increasing the service capacity and a number of additional briefing documents have been circulated to enhance the advisor's knowledge on specific topics such as car clamping, scams and the Green Deal

18. Citizens Advice and Agilisys have asked if Trading Standards Services which are close to their own sites will be willing to give training sessions and explain what happens with information when it is passed across.

19. Lastly, at the meeting in September, we were told that feedback from Trading Standards services had fallen off in the previous 2 weeks, which Citizens Advice hoped was an indication that its work on quality in the 2nd quarter had led to a reduction in problems.

Conclusions

20.   While there have been some teething issues with the Citizens Advice Service, there have been no fundamental service breakdowns.

21.   Referrals are flowing well from Citizens Advice to Oxfordshire. There have been 5201 referrals and notifications to us since the beginning of April. It is not possible to make a direct comparison between the number of matters reported to us between April and September 2011 and the same period in 2012. However, it does seem that the number of cases has, at least, remained stable and may even have increased.

22.   Citizens Advice and Agilisys have committed themselves to quality improvement and the remaining consumer advisors employed by Oxfordshire are able to focus on the consumers in the greatest need: those who are vulnerable or whose disputes are too complex for self-help advice alone.

23.   Monitoring and feedback needs to continue. We will keep on sending feedback on specific problem cases, will contribute to Citizens Advice own partner satisfaction surveys when these are carried out, will support the Citizens Advice and Trading Standards working group and will contribute to repeats of the Trading Standards review carried out this summer.

NAME: John Jackson
Director for Social and Community Services

Background papers: None
Contact Officer: Richard Webb, Acting Head of Trading Standards and Community Safety

October 2012