



**‘Safer by Design’  
Fire and Rescue, Emergency Planning and  
Community Safety**

**Business Strategy**

**2013/14–2014/15**

## Introduction

2013/14 will be the third of the four-year directorate business strategies. These were approved by Council in February 2011 and included savings of £119m to be achieved over the period 2011/12 – 2014/15. These are being achieved by reconfiguring services to establish a smarter, leaner and more cost effective operating environment, whilst at the same time reshaping services to fit the changed local and national policy environment. Funding for demographic and other agreed pressures was also built in.

While there have inevitably been some changes, the strategies are being delivered as planned with the majority of the original savings expected to be achieved. £27m remains to be delivered in 2013/14 and 2014/15 and is planned to be delivered in line with the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Changes to the funding of local government from 2013/14 and new pressures identified since the strategies were originally agreed mean there are now some changes to the savings required in 2013/14 and 2014/15. This revised strategy reflects the updated position and incorporates the £27m remaining original savings and changes that will be agreed by Council in February 2013.

New strategies will be developed as part of the Service & Resource Planning process for 2014/15 and will take into account the Government's next Spending Review.

The “**Safer by Design**” Business Strategy covers the Fire & Rescue Service, Emergency Planning and Community Safety Services. The Strategy has been updated in order to capture the medium term (3-5 year) vision for all of the Services identified, as well as where their aims meet the current priorities of the wider County Council.

In addition, this strategy also highlights how the various services add extra value to local communities, above and beyond their traditional role, by becoming more ‘integrated’ i.e. proactively assisting other Directorates and partners in delivering their community safety objectives.

Savings already delivered or planned for the Fire and Rescue Service do not adversely impact on front-line service provision to the public. The total combined pressures/additional funding and savings include those agreed by Council in February 2011 and February 2012 as well as the proposed new pressures and savings that are included in Annex 3.

| Year on Year            | 2013/14<br>£m | 2014/15<br>£m |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Pressures & Investments | 0.307         | 0.300         |
| Savings                 | -0.500        | -0.100        |

## Oxfordshire County Council Strategic Objectives

The strategy links directly with the Corporate Strategic Objectives centred on delivering a **Thriving Oxfordshire**:

**World Class Economy – This objective will be** supported through our contribution to the sustainable development and protection of the thriving local economy by provision of advice and support. This will enable local businesses and industry to successfully compete in the marketplace, ensure their business continuity and minimise the likelihood of emergencies (e.g. accidents and fires). More broadly, the services also protect the environment for example, reducing both carbon emissions and emergency incidents, as well as through partnership working. with partners such as the Environment Agency to help minimise the effects of flooding, pollution incidents and fire-fighting actions, as well as promoting quicker recovery.

**Healthy and Thriving Communities – This objective is** supported by our work in reducing crime, anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime and also by supporting and protecting those at greatest risk from doorstep crime, domestic abuse and hate crime. In addition, we safeguard our communities from fire risk through the provision of fire protection risk reduction, intervention activities and the provision of information, advice and guidance. We also provide (directly or with partners) preventative programmes for children and young people at risk of offending. We manage and deliver the Junior Citizen Programme countywide as well as the Consumer Challenge Quiz for children with special needs. Trading Standards Service is a key player in the development and delivery of the ‘Support with Confidence’ approval scheme enabling social care clients to make safer choices about the care they receive. Emergency Planning helps to develop service, organisational and community resilience through education, training and the development of community led planning.

Finally, all the services strive to deliver **Efficient Public Services** through their efficiency programmes and providing value for money in general. This is being achieved at a local and regional level to increase efficiency further, the Fire & Rescue Service working within the South East Fire Improvement Partnership and with neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services’ s on various collaborative activities. This has led to data-led, targeted prevention activities, aligned to locality working, which promotes the increased use of volunteers and working with partners.

### Safer by Design

“**Safer by Design**” is our vision for more self-reliant, safer communities - with Oxfordshire County Council working in partnership with a range of third parties - as both provider and/or commissioner - to enable communities to better help themselves. Intelligence-led, locality-specific approaches will identify practical and preventative measures that will be delivered through internal resources and via community-based partnerships. This will aim to address many future challenges and emerging societal risks.

The “**Safer by Design**” vision for the Fire & Rescue Service, in particular, has four main strands of activity which are:

- a) Growing in confidence – a strategy for safer young people
- b) Living in confidence – a strategy for the residents of Oxfordshire
- c) Travelling in confidence – a strategy for those on the move
- d) Working in confidence – a strategy for business.

Furthermore, as an “**Integrated Fire & Rescue Service**”, we also intend to proactively support the broader community safety agenda – not only the priorities of Oxfordshire County Council but also our local partners, such as the Police and Health Service – in order to tackle a much wider range of community safety issues. Through the delivery of this approach we will add public value, demonstrate continuous improvement and enhanced value for money.

The Fire & Rescue Service (and, to a lesser extent, Emergency Planning and Trading Standards), will always maintain a reactive/999 response to calls for assistance, the main emphasis of the Council’s approach towards delivering a safer society is through preventative and educational measures, delivered by multi-skilled employees, voluntary agencies and other partners who can take practical actions as extra eyes and ears (and where appropriate hands) of the County Council. Such an approach promotes risk awareness, self-help, safeguarding and the signposting of specialist assistance and support within the community. It is specifically designed to embrace a preventative agenda and reduce the strain on the resources of other Oxfordshire County Council services such as Adult Social Care.

Those services involved in regulation, such as Trading Standards and Licensing, will seek to move forward in conjunction with District partners to deliver an integrated approach to regulatory services. As this approach develops, Trading Standards will extend locality specific services thereby supporting communities to address local issues and building preventative partnerships.

Approximately 90% of the overall Directorate budget relates to the Fire & Rescue Service and therefore the main delivery arm of the strategy is via this Service. However, the approach proposed is equally effective for all other services within the Directorate. The main capital and revenue issues associated with the Directorate are the creation and maintenance of ‘capacity to respond’. However, the services all have varying ability to make productive use of the ‘capacity to respond’ in intervening periods between safety-related incidents and events occurring.

Our future approach will focus on extending our prevention agenda and, therefore, minimise the call on emergency response resources. The Trading Standards Animal Health team is an example where the ‘capacity to respond’ (e.g. to a foot and mouth outbreak) is also productively used to monitor day-to-day animal welfare issues e.g. inspecting animal markets to reduce the risk of

outbreaks of disease. The Fire & Rescue Service, despite its historic 'low cost and high performance' status, has been less able to achieve full productive effectiveness of its 'standing assets' due to the extensive use of Retained Duty System staff. The Fire and Rescue Service has received investment through additional fulltime Watch Managers whose role is to support Retained Duty System fire stations, personnel and to improve the operational availability of fire engines. Going forward, we intend to further utilise these resources in localities across the county to deliver a broader suite of community safety initiatives.

Successful delivery of this strategy will require the effective management of the following key challenges:

- the scale of the financial savings
- potential further reductions in government grant funding
- a need to increase staff understanding and connection with other teams and also involvement with wider corporate initiatives
- engaging the public and third parties in voluntary service provision
- the potential closure of Consumer Direct service
- growth in demand for reactive services reducing capacity to deliver preventative work streams

The Cabinet has already endorsed Fire & Rescue response targets (80% incidents attended in 11 minutes, 95% in 14 minutes). The current targets can reasonably be expected to be met, with a minimum station disposition (using predominantly Retained Duty System staff) of 24 fire stations and 34 front line fire appliances. From now until 2014/15 the services will continue to:

- Focus predominantly on 'Prevention and Protection' activities to minimise the need for 'Response' resources
- Remain committed to operational excellence, measured by the speed and weight of response to incidents and staffed by competent employees or partners
- Maximise productive use of the 'standing assets' (capital assets, people and 'brand') delivering directly or co-ordinating third party actions designed to improve community safety
- Develop a range of specific activities (minimum one scheme in each of the 14 localities) designed to meet local needs to improve community safety
- Implement wider corporate and community use of Fire Stations
- Use volunteers and other partners to:
  - Increase the number of referrals from other agencies identifying potential threats to or vulnerable people requiring services (Rogue Traders, Domestic Violence Reports, Home Fire Safety Checks)
  - Conduct specific activities on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council, e.g. Home Fire Safety checks fitting smoke alarms/security products
  - Provide youth programmes, e.g. Junior Citizen activities

- Develop and implement effective data sharing protocols
- Exploit synergies between the Fire and Rescue Service and Social and Community Services support services - allowing for integration where effective
- Deliver excellent Customer Service by exploiting the 'can do' attitudes of response staff
- Use intelligence-led customer analysis to target support to 'at risk' and vulnerable groups and communities
- Facilitate the most efficient contribution to local community safety priorities from County resources
- Develop the integrated Road Safety team working with partners to maintain the reduction of those killed and seriously injured on Oxfordshire's roads.
- Work collaboratively with partners to maintain the reduction of those killed and seriously injured on Oxfordshire's roads<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Fire and Rescue Service collaborative initiatives in Thames Valley

## Fire & Rescue and Emergency Planning

| Year on Year            | 2013/14<br>£m | 2014/15<br>£m |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Pressures & Investments | 0.307         | 0.200         |
| Savings                 | -0.426        | 0.000         |

### Delivering efficiencies in the Fire & Rescue Service:

Savings included in the current Medium Term Financial Plan are as follows:

- **Service Review**, including current Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) projects, the national strategic review of the Fire & Rescue Service and synergies with Children, Education and Families (CEF) and Social and Community Services (SCS) Directorates. This includes:
  - Removal of one fire engine - **Already implemented**
  - Reduction of one Technical Fire Safety managerial post–**Already implemented**
  - Reduction of 2 whole time operational fire-fighters through an establishment review at Banbury and Slade Park (Cowley) fire stations - **Already implemented**
  - Structural review to highlight any further efficiencies in relation to managerial posts, which takes into account the need to maintain a 24 hour a day - 7 days a week - 365 days a year emergency response services – **In progress**
  - Incorporating the Oxfordshire County Council Road Safety plan from the Environment and Economy Directorate and identifying any potential for streamlining its workforce - **Implementation in progress**
  - Remove the Retained Recruitment Officer post and transfer all functions to other managerial positions - **Already implemented**
  - Reduce the Assessment Centre promotion and selection processes and medical related expenditure – **Already implemented**

An integrated approach will allow a common customer database therefore allowing us to target our resources to those most at risk. Efficiencies being realised as a result of this include:

- Removal of one managerial/support/clerical post– **In progress**

- Savings (for the Fire and Rescue Service and Emergency Planning) from more effective procurement (including directorate, regional and sub-regional initiatives)– **In progress**
- Explore opportunities to assist the Customer Services Centre in providing its out-of-hours service– **In Progress**

Additional efficiencies identified in the 2012/13 Service & Resource Planning process resulted in the following:

- Reduce initial firefighter trainee training volumes (by increased reliance on qualified fire-fighters transferring into the Service)– **Already implemented**
- Progress opportunities to share properties and services with other directorates and partners, such as South Central Ambulance Service and Thames Valley Police - **In progress based on specific projects in conjunction with the rest of the County Council as part of the wider asset management strategy**
- Increase income from selling spare places on internal courses to local organisations who also wear breathing apparatus / require specialist driver training<sup>2</sup>–**In progress**
- Reduced employer pension contributions as more wholetime and retained fire fighters join the new fire pension scheme. This is affected by the increased pressure of more fire fighters joining the scheme and back pay for retained fire fighters.- **In progress**
- Reduced number of emergency callouts by promoting education and measures to prevent fires eg install smoke alarms – **In progress**
- Establish a single Thames Valley Fire Control Centre by 2014 in partnership with Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue and Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue. This is supported by a grant of £1.8m from central government.- **In progress**

New savings identified as part of the 2013/14 Service & Resource Planning Process are as follows:

**14SCS29** - Whole – time fire fighter pension savings £0.050m

**14SCS30** - Reduced emergency call outs for retained fire fighters £0.030m

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service has been subject to several external assessments and inspections all of which identified that we remain high performing and low cost and maximise the use of our human capital, so therefore there is very limited managerial capacity remaining.

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<sup>2</sup> Limited to cost recovery and contributions to overheads only



### Capital Implications

Capital grant of £1.3m and revenue grant of £0.5m has been received from Department for Communities and Local Government for the fire control programme. Our two partners have received the same levels of grant. So the capital investment concerning the Thames Valley Fire Control Centre will be cost neutral to Oxfordshire County Council.

Changes in the central government capital grant funding process from 2013 means that we now need to submit bids for specific capital projects based on innovation and efficiency.

### **In relation to Emergency Planning, the following efficiencies have been identified:**

- **Reducing Print Costs** - using the intranet, Thames Valley local Resilience Forum website and National Resilience Extranet (for Business Continuity purposes) to store emergency and business continuity advice and plans - making updating easier, faster and cheaper. Planning internet pages to provide a one-stop location for advice and resources with a review of content and signposts offered– **In progress.**
- **Partnership Working with District Councils** - Delivering a three-year Memorandum of Understanding between Oxfordshire County Council and the District Councils to develop Oxfordshire plans - reducing duplication and encouraging all local responders to act together in response to alerts or events for a faster, more efficient response. - **In progress**
- **Online and Flexible Training** - on specific plans and in skill-sets to facilitate training in own-time and prevent travel. Where possible, sharing training with District partners, encouraging commonality of approach, offering courses at several locations to reduce travel and increasing opportunities for mutual aid in the future.– **In progress**
- **Resilience During Emergencies** - Working with the Customer Service Centre to identify opportunities to provide a more robust and customer-focused telephone and information system for use during an emergency to warn & inform the public of risks and assist residents to help themselves through an event– **In progress**
- **Community Emergency Plans** - Support further development of community emergency plans across all Parish and Town Councils using an Oxfordshire County Council template. Also promoting business continuity to the local businesses with partner agencies–**In progress**
- **ICT Resilience** - supporting ICT resilience through liaison with the Business Continuity Steering Group (BCSG) and ensuring that flexible Business Continuity plans are in place across the organisation– **In progress**

Impact on other Council services

Staff within the Customer Services Centre may have to undertake additional 'co-ordinating' responsibilities due to the removal of the retained recruitment officer post, as well as the improvement in resilience during emergencies.

Capital Implications

The savings listed above are not dependent on capital funding and will not release any capital assets.

## Community Safety – Safer Communities Unit

| Year on Year            | 2013/14<br>£m      | 2014/15<br>£m |
|-------------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Pressures & Investments | 0.000              | 0.000         |
| Savings                 | 0.001 <sup>3</sup> | 0.000         |

During 2011, a review of the Oxfordshire Safer Communities Partnership was completed to ensure the partnership was ready for the changes likely to arise following the election of the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley. A key change to the partnership was the adoption of a strong business planning cycle designed to identify and tackle the most significant community safety risks for Oxfordshire. Going forwards, the Safer Communities Unit will have an important role in supporting the partnership to identify these risks and to plan effective interventions. The Unit will also need to support the process for fund bidding from the Police and Crime Commissioner, the success of which could be crucial in determining how much resources come into Oxfordshire.

Currently, the County receives the Community Safety Fund which replaced the Stronger and Safer Communities Grant and Young People's Substance Misuse Grant from April 2011. This grant reduced by approximately 50% in 2012/13. This funding will be allocated to the Police and Crime Commissioner rather than directly to local authorities from April 2013. The County Council will still be a statutory community safety partner and will continue to provide £0.200m funding to the district councils for the financial year 2013/14.

The recent Thames Valley Police Force restructure resulted in structures which support work at either at a Local Policing Area level (aligned with District Council boundaries) or at a force wide level. The Oxfordshire wide structure (Basic Command Unit) has been removed. As a consequence, in order to provide for clear links between Oxfordshire County Council and Thames Valley Police and to maintain strong county-wide partnerships, a temporary joint Community Safety Manager position has been created. This position replaces the Safer Communities Unit manager post.

Reduced funding may result in Community Safety Partnerships refocusing their resources and partnership activities. This will not affect the core service provided by the Safer Communities Unit but may affect joint funded projects posts that we host (e.g. the County Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator). The unit will work closely with the Community Safety Partnerships to mitigate the effects of any reduction in funding.

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<sup>3</sup> This relates to a one-off saving that falls out at the end of 2012/13.

### Delivering efficiencies

The Safer Communities Unit budget includes an element which is passed through to local Community Safety Partnerships. For 2011/12 this was reduced by 21.6% to £0.511m (from £0.652m in 2010/11) – **Already implemented.**

### Impact on service users and communities

Any reduction in funding for Community Safety partnerships will have a direct impact on the community safety activities undertaken by the partnerships. From April 2013 specific community safety grant funding (£0.287m) will be channelled via the Police and Crime Commissioner. They will hold the responsibility for decisions on activities and projects to fund. The Community Safety Partnership will need to adapt to manage any service delivery changes from this new funding arrangement. The funding currently allocated to local Community Safety Partnerships by the County Council is used by partnerships to support community safety officer posts to coordinate and deliver community safety projects addressing identified local priorities.

Partnerships will determine how to manage the impact of any reduction but an inevitable consequence is likely to be a reduction in coordinated County wide activities and partnership working.

### Capital Implications

There would be no capital assets released as a result of the changes.

## Community Safety – Trading Standards

| Year on Year            | 2013/14<br>£m | 2014/15<br>£m |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Pressures & Investments | 0.000         | 0.100         |
| Savings                 | -0.082        | -0.100        |

The Trading Standards Service enforces approximately 80 Acts of Parliament and several hundred sets of subordinate legislation on behalf of the Council. The wide remit of the Service includes but is not limited to activities such as:

Food safety  
 Fair trading and fraud  
 Illegal money lending  
 Counterfeiting,  
 Farm animal health and welfare controls  
 Under-age sales  
 Product safety  
 Overweight heavy goods vehicles  
 Doorstep crime  
 Storage and sale of hazardous substances

In respect of the duty to enforce legislation, no general minimum requirement is defined. However, the Service prioritises its response to alleged breaches of consumer protection legislation and only responds to complaints and intelligence that require a response to prevent harm (physical or economic). This is currently 42% of all complaints that on initial assessment suggest that a breach of legislation has occurred. In addition, the service already fails to meet the requirements of the national risk assessment scheme which should be used to determine the frequency of inspection of businesses within the county.

### Delivering efficiencies

From April 2012 a National Trading Standards Board was established which is responsible for allocating Government funds to tackle national or regional consumer protection threats. It is likely that significant funding will be available for local authorities either

individually or in collaborative groups for both short-term projects and long-term service provision. It is intended that Oxfordshire will seek to capitalise on these opportunities where they can provide income and support the achievement of outcomes in Oxfordshire.

The existing plans to deliver efficiencies as included in the existing Medium Term Financial Plan still apply:

- Consumer Direct - Citizen's Advice have taken on responsibility for the Consumer Direct service. Our first tier consumer advice service has now been transferred to the national Citizens Advice Consumer Service. Businesses and consumers in Oxfordshire receive initial advice from this service and are then referred to us where the consumer is vulnerable, the matter is complex, face to face advice is required or where it appears that there has been a breach of legislation. – **Already implemented.**
- Complex Citizen's Advice Cases - Complex cases or those requiring face-to-face advice are passed to local Citizens Advice Bureaux and Trading Standards Services. Therefore, a new working relationship between local Bureaux and Trading Standards is required. – **Already implemented.**
- Community Liaison Officer Posts – Reducing these posts from 3 to 2. These posts engage with communities in order to identify their needs for our services and deliver events and projects designed to raise awareness of consumer issues. The reduction in posts will require the team to target work towards the most vulnerable areas and communities of Oxfordshire – **Already implemented.**
- Managerial and Internal Restructure - to support the business strategy principle of reducing the number of managers in the organisation – **Already implemented.**
- A review has been completed of the benefits, risks, costs and feasibility of developing a shared Trading Standards Service with another local authority. The business benefits were not sufficient for this option to be implemented in full but less formal collaboration is still being considered. – **In progress – pressure of £0.100m arises from non – achievement of original saving.**
- Increasing Grant Income - initial plans envisaged an increase in grant income to £0.090m net from 2012/13. It has not been possible to deliver this proposal. Income across the Community Safety Services will be sufficient to meet any shortfall in Trading Standards income particularly given the likely income levels of the Gypsy and Traveller Service.

#### Impact on service users and communities:

New funding opportunities may mitigate some of the effects of these reductions. The Service already operates a minimum service in respect of business inspections and in response to complaints. The proposed changes will focus resources more on reactive 'response' services. The reduction in Community Liaison Officer posts will result in a reduced community engagement and harm prevention activities (e.g. doorstep crime training for carers, promotion of the Stop Loan Sharks project, support for the Junior Citizen programme, proactive business legal advice). A reduction in managerial posts will result in a change in enforcement

capacity and capacity to investigate complaints. The potential for collaboration will enable some of this impact to be mitigated through shared resources and expertise.

Impact on other council services:

Reducing prevention work may affect support and delivery of electric blanket testing and the Junior Citizen programme which may have an impact on the Fire and Rescue Service. The management restructure will impact on internal workloads and could have a knock-on effect on support provided to other services. Significant pressures could arise on managers when the volume of legal work is high.

Capital implications

There are no capital implications in the changes being implemented.

## Community Safety – Gypsy and Traveller Service

| Year on Year            | 2013/14<br>£m      | 2014/15<br>£m |
|-------------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Pressures & Investments | 0.000              | 0.000         |
| Savings                 | 0.007 <sup>4</sup> | 0.000         |

The Gypsy & Travellers Service provides landlord services for some 80 families resident on the County Council's 6 permanent sites as well as safeguarding the county's settled communities from the problems associated with unauthorised encampments. The service also provides this function for Buckinghamshire County Council and Brent Housing Partnership which are generating additional income. Further contracts are being sought.

There is no statutory requirement on the County Council to provide permanent gypsy and traveller sites. However, we own the Oxfordshire sites and as such have a duty to maintain them. The cost of doing so is minimised by efficient running of the sites to collect rent and ensure high site occupancy.

In respect of unauthorised encampments, the team's work directly supports the Authority to discharge a range of statutory responsibilities, e.g. to provide for welfare and education needs of travellers and to deal with obstructions on the highways. In addition, the team's work minimises clean-up costs and promotes good relationships between the settled and traveller communities.

### Delivering efficiencies

Income Generation - The Gypsy and Traveller Service generates income of £1m from contracts and rents, leaving a net cost to the service of £0.109m. Further contract or consultancy opportunities are being sought which may reduce the cost of the service further– **Currently being examined.**

### Impact on service users and communities:

As the proposals are income generating, there are no negative impacts on communities.

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<sup>4</sup> This relates to a one-off saving that falls out at the end of 2012/13.



Impact on other council services:

There are no implications on other council services.

Capital implications:

There are no immediate capital implications from the proposals. Any increase in contracts for service provision could lead to an increased need for staff and associated office space.

## **External pressures**

### **Additional Pressures from 2013/14 – Fire & Rescue, Community Safety and Trading Standards**

**14SCS31 Fire and Rescue £0.200m** from 2014/15 - Changes to the firefighter pension scheme allowing retained firefighters who were employed between 2001 and 2006 to join the old pension scheme and buy back pensionable service. This is an estimated cost pending publication of the national agreement. The number of retained staff who will opt to buy back service is not yet known.

**14SCS32 Trading Standards £0.100m** from 2014/15 – pressure arising from non – achievable saving from joint working.

### **Risks potentially leading to additional funding pressures**

All our Services recognise the financial climate and the need to promote innovation and increased efficiency in addressing new challenges. There are numerous small scale examples where individuals and their managers have come up with minor service amendments which have either increased resilience, improved performance or made a financial efficiency. This approach will continue and, wherever possible, new pressures will be met within the services concerned.

However, there are also a number of financial challenges – some, as yet, are undefined - which may be beyond the scope of the services to absorb within current budgets. These include:

#### **1. Warwickshire – Increasing Health and Safety implications for Firefighters / Fire Service operations**

Following the four Warwickshire fire fighter fatalities, the sector is awaiting detailed evidence from the Health and Safety Executive and Police following the recent trials. This matter has the potential to place an increased level of training burden on our retained workforce, as well as other operational requirements such as the provision of specialist equipment and levels of command and control at incidents.

#### **2. Firefighter Personal Protective Equipment**

After extending its current contract which commenced in 2001 for an additional two years, and deciding to step back from a South East contract that would have increased costs of Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue in the region of £0.090m per annum on its current budget, Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue via Oxfordshire County Council procurement has successfully undertaken its own tender exercise and has awarded a new 8-year contract to Lion Apparel Systems. The resulting ‘total care’ contract will guarantee high-quality, comparable fire kit for firefighters, at a cost of £0.047m per annum less than the South East contract and avoiding some of

the potential cost escalation contract clauses in that contract. Nevertheless, despite the clear value for money the contract offers, it is still £0.051m per annum more expensive than the current budget. The Fire & Rescue Service will seek to manage this pressure from within its total budget.

## **General Risks**

### **1. Fuel**

With on-going inflationary increases in the price of fuel, Community Safety services continue to have additional pressures placed on them due to their reliance on diesel to deliver public services.

### **2. Maintenance of Buildings**

The capital building stock of the Service is requiring regular maintenance, which, in conjunction with the rapidly developing urban areas across the county and the associated congestion of the road network, is putting increasing pressure on the Service to consider a major building programme that could see fire stations being relocated in order to better meet current response time targets. This pressure, however, may have longer-term benefits associated with it as the Service continues to proactively look to share assets with other Oxfordshire County Council services and partners, such as Thames Valley Police, neighbouring Fire & Rescue Services, district councils and the Ambulance Service. – Therefore consolidating public sector capital assets in the county over time.

## Summary

The Services of the former Community Safety Directorate are embarking on a significant period of change as we continue integration with Social and Community Services and other partners. Coupled with the comprehensive national strategic review of Fire & Rescue Services and the work within Trading Standards around forming external partnerships require significant change management.

Within Fire and Rescue, there is a significant challenge in order to meet the original £0.662m efficiency saving that remained 'to be identified' in the current Medium Term Financial Plan. The Service's history of a low cost base and previous efficiencies means there is little capacity for the delivery of further savings without significantly causing detriment to the front line emergency response.

The previous announcements over the potential abolition of the Office of Fair Trading and the National Consumer Direct helpline creates uncertainty over government Trading Standards direction. However, the government appears to be wishing to pass responsibility for consumer protection and enforcement to the professional Trading Standards Officers at Local Authority level and, subject to accompanying resources, Oxfordshire County Council Trading Standards welcomes this future opportunity.

Our future approach will continue to involve re-engineering our existing working practices and through maximising the use of the councils assets (both human and capital), create an integrated service delivery to produce a safer, more informed society. **“Safer by Design”** is our vision for self-reliant safer communities, with enabling actions and resources provided or commissioned by Oxfordshire County Council, working in partnership with a range of third parties. Intelligence-led, locality-specific approaches will identify practical preventative measures delivered through internal resources and via community based partnerships. This will address many of the emerging societal risks that may occur. Through a truly integrated approach, we will seek to improve the safety, awareness and confidence of those who choose to grow-up, live, work or travel in Oxfordshire.