

Welcome and foreword

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Welcome to Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service's Statement of Assurance for 2020 to 2021. As the Cabinet Member and Chief Fire Officer for Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service, we are pleased to present this statement of assurance for our local communities outlining the way in which we meet the statutory duties of the Fire and Rescue Services Act, Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order, Civil Contingencies Act and the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018 (the Framework) sets out the requirement for all fire and rescue authorities to provide annual assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and to show how they have due regard to the requirements included in the Framework, and the expectations set out in the authorities' own risk management plans. To demonstrate this, the Framework requires that each authority must publish an annual statement of assurance.

In 2017 we published our 5-year CRMP to meet the challenges of our communities over the period and each year an additional action plan is produced to address the developments within the fire sector. We ensure a proactive approach, which is focussed on preventative activities, and leads to a safer and thriving Oxfordshire.

We are proud of what our service has delivered in the last 12 months, in light of and in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the way we have continued to support the most vulnerable members of our community.

Finance

Our budget for 2020-2021

- The total net expenditure for Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service was £26.1m.
- The cost of providing the fire and rescue service in 2020/21 was approximately 10p per day for each person within Oxfordshire and the cost per head of population was £37.37
- We provided a service at a cost of £38,584 per member of staff in 2020/21
- Our overall expenditure against the number of incidents we attend is £4,150 per incident in 2020-21.

Financial data is taken from the CIPFA Fire and Rescue Statistics.

[Link to CIPFA website](#)

Auditors findings

Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service (OFRS) are an integral part of Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) who provide the statement of accounts, audit reports and Pay Policy statement, which can be found on the OCC public website.

A summary of auditors' reports and findings can be found in the Annual Audit Letter 2018-19 on the link below. The Accounts and Audit Regulations require local authorities, including fire and rescue authorities, to prepare an annual governance statement in support of the annual statement of accounts. Full details can be found in the OCC Annual Governance Statement, which is included in our 'Statement of Accounts' publication at the end of the document.

[Annual accounts and audit
Pay Policy Statement](#)

Governance

As the fire authority, OCC are responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. OCC is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

OCC has approved and adopted a code of corporate governance that is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA / SOLACE Framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government'.

The OCC Annual Governance Statement enables the fire and rescue service to demonstrate that it has fulfilled its obligations under the Framework. Full details can be found in the OCC Annual Governance Statement, which is included in our 'Statement of Accounts' publication.

General arrangements for ensuring effectiveness of the system of Internal Control is governed by the Corporate Governance Framework, which sets out the Council's approach to corporate governance.

[Corporate Governance Assurance Framework](#)

The OCC Monitoring Officer has a statutory responsibility for ensuring the Council complies with its legal requirements and conducts its business properly. This is achieved through the following:

- Corporate Governance Assurance Group (CGAG): Co-ordinates preparation of the Annual Governance Statement and, therefore, receives corporate lead assessments as well as identification of areas of improvement on the internal control environment.

- Corporate Governance Policies: The Monitoring Officer has delegated authority to approve and amend operational policies and procedures relating to corporate governance, if necessary, in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council.
- Chief Executives Direct Reports (CEDR): Provides the strategic oversight of the work of the Council and reviews the work of Cabinet by scrutinising the Forward Plan and raising any issues of concern. The Monitoring Officer sits as a designated Officer on CEDR to advise and assist in relation to policies and strategies in compliance with legal requirements.
- Audit Working Group (AWG) and Audit & Governance Committee (A&GC): The Monitoring Officer reports to this Committee with regards to compliance of corporate governance policies, including Members register of interests.

Operational

Fire and rescue authorities' function within a clearly defined statutory and policy framework. The key documents setting this out are:

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 sets out the duties and powers of fire and rescue authorities (FRA's). There are four key responsibilities for FRAs that they must ensure that they make provision for including:

- extinguishing fires in their area
- protecting life and property in the event of fires in their area
- rescuing and protecting people in the event of a road traffic collision, and
- rescuing and protecting people in the event of other emergencies.

We address these core functions in our CRMP, which identifies and assesses foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect our community.

[The Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004](#)

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA) places certain duties on all Category 1 Responders, including OFRS. One of these duties is the formation of the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum (TVLRF).

The Act requires Category 1 Responders to maintain plans for:

- preventing emergencies.
- reducing, controlling or mitigating the effects of emergencies.
- taking other action in the event of emergencies.

- and provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations regarding business continuity management.

These plans are drawn from risk assessments and have regard for the arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public at the time of an emergency. The Emergency Planning Unit, which is part of OFRS, has overall responsibility and is key to helping the council meet these duties.

[Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)
[Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum website](#)

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

OFRS enforces general fire safety legislation on behalf of the county council.

Our enforcement activities adhere to the principles of 'better regulation' contained in the Enforcement Concordat and Regulators Compliance Code. We aim to support business and other responsible persons through education and the provision of advice and guidance, and where necessary, we will take enforcement action.

Full details of how we discharge our responsibilities under fire safety legislation can be found at:

[Fire safety advice for businesses web page](#)

Fire Safety Act 2021

The Fire Safety Bill was introduced in March 2020 following the Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017, will be passed as statute law on 29 April 2021 and become the Fire Safety Act 2021.

The Fire Safety Act 2021 has been designed to amend the Fire Safety Order 2005, with new responsibilities for duty holders, building owners and Facility Managers or 'responsible persons', based upon the recommendations made from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.

[Fire Safety Act 2021](#)

The Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007

The Fire & Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007 instructs fire authorities to make provision for:

- Decontamination of people and to limit harm to the environment at chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear emergencies.

- Rescue of people who may be trapped, including emergencies involving collapsed structures, trains, trams or aircraft, and use its resources beyond the scope of its day to day operations.
- Securing of personnel, services and training to carry out the above functions.
- Response to emergencies outside the fire authorities' area.

[The Fire & Rescue Services \(Emergencies\) \(England\) Order 2007](#)
[National Fire Chiefs Council](#)

The Localism Act 2011

The Localism Act 2011 gives fire authorities powers of competence to carry out its functions so that it will be able to do anything they consider appropriate for purposes linked to their statutory responsibilities to help deliver innovative and more personalised services to their communities, including making charges for certain services. These powers enable both councils and fire and rescue authorities to act innovatively to generate efficiencies and secure value for money outcomes.

Full details of the of the Localism Act 2011 and community right to challenge and right to bid for community assets can be found at:

[Community Rights and Localism Act](#)
[Localism Act 2011](#)

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018

The current Fire and Rescue National Framework for England sets out the government's priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in England to:

- Identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face, make provision for prevention and protection activities and respond to incidents appropriately.
- Work in partnership with their communities and a wide range of partners locally and nationally to deliver their service.
- Be accountable to communities for the service they provide.

[The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018](#)

Prevention Activity

During 2019 an assessment of our prevention activity was conducted and in 2020 a new evaluation framework was introduced to ensure our activity target those most in need of support and will continue to deliver an effective service.

A new induction programme was introduced in 2020 for our Home and Community safety advisors which included improved training on safeguarding and working with

vulnerable people, increasing our support and education to the residents of Oxfordshire.

We developed on-line delivery of our Fire Cadet programme in September 2020 to ensure our young people continued to be engaged during the Covid-19 lockdown and restrictions.

Protection Activity

The Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on the delivery of our protection activities resulting in the service adapting the way in which it engaged with the businesses of Oxfordshire to continue to deliver advice and support, but also where appropriate, still respond to fire safety concerns and those at risk from fire.

The service has continued to deliver its services via alternative methods, taking advantage of technology to deliver many elements and where face-to-face contact was required, ensured an approach was taken that provided the safety of both the businesses as well as the protection team.

The service protection team have reviewed the Fire Safety Bill and are implementing the additional measures into working practices, ensuring the service continues to deliver an appropriate level of support, guidance and where necessary enforcement to keep the residents of Oxfordshire safe from fire.

Response Activity

The Covid situation has caused us to operate in a very different manner. We have put in place many different procedures, use different equipment and reviewed what we do and how in light of the risks posed to our staff and the community at large. This has also led to OFRS supporting other agencies including the Ambulance Service and Local Authorities.

The Kerslake report into the Manchester arena bombings has led to work on an action plan with Thames Valley Fire Control Services and Thames Valley Fire & Rescue Services. This has provided activities that would ensure that the most effective response would be in place if a similar event were to occur within the Thames Valley. Work will continue with this when new findings from the most current inquiry has been completed and a report has been provided.

Following the Grenfell tragedy an initial part of the inquiry provided a significant amount of learning and improvements that could be adopted throughout fire and rescue services nationally. We have worked with TVFCS and Thames Valley colleagues to ensure that if a similar incident occurred, we would respond in the most effective manner possible.

We have provided internet enabled tablets for use on fire engines that provide crews with up to date risk information about buildings and areas that present additional

risks within Oxfordshire and beyond, the latest national guidance to support operational responses and the means for reporting community safety activities.

Operational Audits

A range of Thematic Audits are carried out each year for the purpose of operational assurance. Audits enable us to check knowledge/effectiveness of operational guidance and procedures, and training. Audits can also provide confirmation that operational learning has been embedded across the service.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the service adapted its response to operational incidents in order to minimise the risk of unnecessary exposure to the virus. The programme of auditing for 2020-2021 was placed on pause, however an audit on staff compliance with guidance for wearing of PPE in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic when attending operational incidents was conducted.

The audit was undertaken from 11th November 2020 and 1st February 2021, it assessed just under 100 incidents (97) and the outcome highlighted a 99% compliance rate with service PPE expectations.

Collaborative arrangements

Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) which officially opened in 2015 and bought together the 3 control rooms from the fire & rescue services within Thames Valley, continues to handle and manage the mobilisation of resources to incidents in Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire areas, demonstrating the benefits and positive outcome of collaborative arrangements.

The Thames Valley collaboration board continues to explore further areas in which the 3 Thames Valley FRS's can work together to achieve positive outcomes for its residents.

OFRS have entered into agreements with Thames Valley Police to collocate in some of its buildings, offering savings to the tax-payer and closer working with our Blue-light partners.

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue have further strengthened collaboration with a wider group of Fire and Rescue Services, working more closely with Warwickshire and Gloucestershire. As FRS's that are an integral part of their local county council, there is much experience that can be shared and learned to further enhance the value we add to our local communities, and our county council partners. We will be working together to deliver joint procurement and share best practice.

Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's) for support exist with agencies such as Thames Valley Police, South Central Ambulance Service and the Defence Fire and Rescue Service, alongside MOU's with the voluntary sector including The British Red Cross and Oxfordshire Lowland Rescue.

Chaired by Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue services Chief Fire Officer, the Channel Panel is an early intervention scheme that supports people who are at risk of radicalisation and provides practical support tailored to individual needs. It can help people to make positive choices about their lives. It is about safeguarding individuals vulnerable to radicalisation by using existing multi-agency working between local authorities to identify individuals at risk of being drawn into terrorism, assess the nature and extent of that risk, develop the most appropriate support plan for the individual concerned, with a clear process in place to ensure that the right people are referred to the panel. The panel has been assessed against its performance for 2020 – 2021 and is delivering against all areas set by the Home Office.

Training Activity

The adoption of National operational guidance (NOG) has influenced a complete review of the training currently delivered in Oxfordshire to ensure that standards of training meet national expectations. Delivery and provision of training in Oxfordshire was found to be at a high standard and to ensure it continues to be delivered at this level, a system of quality assurance (QA) has been introduced at all levels including instructor and training delivery, QA of our development and maintenance of competence training programmes, as well as external quality assurance.

H&S Activity

OFRS have committed to the South East Region H&S Auditing programme. The process follows the HSG65 model for H&S management and governance. As part of our commitment to this programme OFRS now has a member of the team qualified as a Lead Auditor to conduct assessments of Oxfordshire and can be utilised by all other FRS's in the South-East region.

The Coronavirus pandemic posed a significant and unprecedented workload for the Health, Safety and Welfare team (HS&W). At the outset the HS&W Manager was involved with the response to the virus, providing guidance for PPE, Operational precautions and education around the virus and its potential for spreading.

Some of the notable pieces of work were the production of overarching Covid-19 Risk Assessment and local versions of nationally agreed tripartite Risk Assessments, agreeing additional PPE control measures and sourcing & introducing face coverings for all staff, implementing cleaning and disinfecting regimes for workplaces and equipment, including adoption of new procedures for Breathing Apparatus disinfecting, and agreeing and implementing 'Covid Secure' measures for all locations.

CRMP consultation

In 2017 we published our 5-year CRMP to meet the challenges of our communities over the period and each year an additional action plan is produced to address the developments within the fire sector. The CRMP Action Plan 2020-21 provides an

update on the on-going projects for the forthcoming year. The projects held in the 20-21 were first presented in the CRMP action plan 2019-20 and this document, along with the 2017 5-year CRMP, were both subject to full public consultation where information was provided on our planned activities to enable and encourage active and informed participation.

The current 5-year CRMP is due to come to an end in 2022 and planning for the new strategic CRMP is underway. Staff and partners are being engaged and public consultation will be conducted between September and December 2021.

[Community Risk Management Plans](#)

[Annual report](#)

Each year the service provides a report on its performance. This allows us to recognise areas where we have done well, identify where we can improve our service and identify trends in specific incidents and emergency types. It helps us decide where to focus our efforts and resources to reduce threats and seize opportunities. This report contributes to our future planning and is essential to our process of integrated risk management.

[Annual report](#)

[HMICFRS inspection](#)

In August 2020, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) were commissioned by the Home Secretary to inspect how fire and rescue services in England were responding to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In September 2020, whilst still dealing with the longer-term nature of the pandemic, the HMICFRS inspected OFRS and focussed on four key areas; what is working well and what is being learned; how the fire sector is responding to the Covid-19 crisis; how fire services are dealing with the problems they face and what changes are likely as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Her Majesty's Inspector, Matt Parr, recognised the engagement and positive contribution OFRS had made, and were continuing to make, to our communities during the pandemic.

The service has continued to provide its core statutory functions throughout the pandemic in line with advice from the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). This means that the service has continued to respond to calls from the public and attend emergencies. It has also continued to undertake prevention work and carry out home safety visits using a risk-based approach in line with NFCC guidance. Face-to-face visits by operational staff and community safety advisors were conducted for the most vulnerable people. Protection activity broadly continued – the service undertook

building consultations and enforcement activity, and visited those properties that posed immediate threat to life.

OFRS developed new ways of working during the pandemic and many of these have transformed how OFRS work by using technology and virtual platforms to ensure that they work both effectively and efficiently.

In summary, HMICFRS reported that the service responded well during the pandemic and provided additional support to its community. It used its wholetime and on-call firefighters to respond to emergencies, and the increased availability of its on-call firefighters allowed the service to use them to support its partners, especially the local ambulance trust. This meant the people of Oxfordshire were well supported through the pandemic.

More detail on assessments of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue service can be found on the HMICFRS website.

[HMICFRS](#)

Signed

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