



Notice of a Meeting

Safer & Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 22 April 2013 at 10.00 am

County Hall, Oxford, OX1 1ND

Membership

Chairman - Councillor Lawrie Stratford
Deputy Chairman - Councillor Stewart Lilly

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

Notes:

Date of next meeting: 17 June 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	-	<i>Eira Hale</i> , Tel: (01865) 323969 eira.hale@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Peter G. Clark.

Peter G. Clark
County Solicitor

April 2013

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

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.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments**
2. **Declarations of Interest - see guidance note on the back page**
3. **Minutes** (Pages 1 - 8)
4. **Speaking to or petitioning the Committee**

SCRUTINY MATTERS

5. **Thames Valley Police & Police Crime Commissioner Q&A**

10.10

Police & Crime Commissioner Anthony Stansfeld will introduce his plan for policing for the coming year. Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police, Chief Constable Sara Thornton will follow with a more detailed presentation. The presentations will include a consideration of performance in priority crime and other measures such as confidence and satisfaction as well as funding proposals, with regard to Community Safety.

The committee is invited to question the Police Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable about the plans for policing Oxfordshire in 2013/14.

6. **Doorstep Crime Update** (Pages 9 - 12)

11.30

This report will be presented by Richard Webb, Head of Trading Standards. It will provide an update on the current volume of doorstep crime and the Oxfordshire County Council approach to reducing it.

7. **Flood Response** (Pages 13 - 16)

11.40

Bethan Morgan, County Emergency Planning Officer, will present a report outlining our county wide plans with regard to flooding, and their effectiveness.

8. **Retained Duty System Availability Review Report** (Pages 17 - 22)

12.00

Nathan Travis, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, will present an update on the Retained Duty System Availability Review.

The review considered alternative on-call options to provide additional resilience and revised operational models to deliver efficient and effective Fire and Rescue Services within projected budgetary constraints. The review was carried out by officers from Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service as well as members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee are now asked to consider the report and support the implementation of the recommendations made.

9. Director's Update

12.20

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

The Chief Fire Officer, Dave Etheridge, will update the committee on key issues for Fire & rescue, Community Safety and Trading Standards.

10. Forward Plan

12.40

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=159&RP=115>

11. Close of Meeting

12.50

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, 18 February 2013 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.45 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Lawrie Stratford – in the Chair

Councillor Stewart Lilly (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor John Goddard
Councillor Anthony Gearing
Councillor Patrick Greene
Councillor Susanna Pressel
Councillor Bill Service
Councillor Alan Thompson
Councillor Carol Viney

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Judith Heathcoat

Officers: Eira Hale, Lead Analyst
Jacquie Bugeja, Head of Registration and Coroner's Service
Dave Etheridge, Chief Fire Officer (Item 5)
Richard Webb, Head of Trading Standards and Community Safety (Item 5)
Nathan Travis, Deputy Chief Fire Officer (Item 8)
Carys Alty, Community Safety Unit Manager (Item 9)
Karen Warren, Cultural Services Manager (Item 10)
Claire Phillips, Senior Policy & Performance Officer (Item 11)

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting [, together with a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting/the following additional documents:] and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports [agenda, reports and schedule/additional documents] are attached to the signed Minutes.

5/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Apologies sent and noted from Councillor Mallon, who had been invited to attend for item 9.

Two members noted disappointment that he was not able to attend.

6/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE BACK PAGE

(Agenda No. 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

7/13 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 November were approved as a correct record and signed by the chairman.

Matters arising from the meeting 12 November:

- Item 57/12: Councillor Pressel requested a road safety update. The chairman confirmed that this would be covered as part of item 5 on this agenda.
- Item 57/12: Councillor Pressel requested an update on the community library co-ordinator. The chairman confirmed that this would be covered as part of item 5 on this agenda.
- Item 59/12: Councillor Pressel requested a report be brought to the committee on hate crime. The chairman confirmed that this was part of the work programme for the coming year.
- Item 65/12: Councillor Pressel queried whether Councillor Mallon had been invited to speak to the committee about cohesion. The Chairman confirmed that this was also part of the work programme for the coming year and that he would do his best to ensure that Councillor Mallon attended meetings when invited.

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 January were approved as a correct record and signed by the chairman.

There were no matters arising from the meeting 10 January.

8/13 SPEAKING TO OR PETITIONING THE COMMITTEE

(Agenda No. 4)

There were no requests to address the committee or petitions.

9/13 DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

(Agenda No. 5)

Jacquie Bugeja gave a verbal update on behalf of the Head of Law and Culture, Peter Clark. The update included, amongst other items:

- Oxfordshire are members of the national working group for implementing the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act, but it is not due to come into effect for some time. A timetable for implementation is still being developed.
- Refurbishment of the Coroner's Court is almost complete. It has included the introduction of a range of technological improvements. The cost of this has been partly covered by the Ministry of Justice.
- Library Service:
 - Now implementing 'Universal Offers'. This is a national approach to library services, defining what public libraries should provide, and what users should expect.
 - The National Library day on 9th February was a great success.
 - The self-service project is on track for delivery to all libraries. It is currently installed in 35 libraries and feedback is positive.
 - James Hazelwood has now been appointed as the Community Library Co-ordinator.
 - CIPFA statistics show that Oxford Central library is the second busiest in the country for issues.
- A review of the items and collections within the museum service is underway. A new collection has gone on show and is receiving positive feedback.

Jacque answered a range of questions and confirmed that there were many complexities with the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act but Oxfordshire would follow the national guidelines, once they had been established, to ensure the integrity of the service. She also explained that the project to introduce voluntary staff into libraries was progressing well and getting support from local communities.

Dave Etheridge, Chief Fire Officer, gave a verbal update from Community Safety. The update included:

- A summary of the role of Oxfordshire Trading Standard in supporting the Food Standards Agency with the investigation into horsemeat in some beef products. More testing would be carried out over the next few weeks but we have good local controls over labelling of meat products. There were a range of questions to which Councillor Heathcoat stated that all Oxfordshire County Council contractors will have been checked within the terms of their contract and that the Council has tight controls over those contracts. She also stated that at this stage it was not possible to categorically say that food or food sources used by Carillion were being tested or what any results may be, as the Food Standards Agency was still conducting its investigations. In response to further questioning Dave Etheridge also clarified that recent reductions to trading standards staff had been at the management level. This had not effected front line staff or their ability to respond to the situation.
- There have been 5 authorisations for the use of RIPA in the last quarter. Three of these were in relation to doorstep crime and one of these resulted in evidence being passed to another agency, a conviction and custodial sentence.

- A very wet winter and high river levels meant that there has been some flooding in the last quarter, but this has been dealt with effectively. It is possible there may be more flooding to respond to in the next quarter. A full report on flood responses will be discussed at the next meeting of this committee.
- The Fire Control project is going well. The tenders for software and hardware will be submitted in the next month.
- Dave Etheridge extended his thanks to members for their support of the OFRS Risk Management Plans.
- The road safety strategy is incorporated into the Integrated risk Management Plan and road safety information will now be included in the Fire Service Annual Performance Report.

Several questions were asked and confirmation was given that the changes to RIPA which require prior authorisation by a judge should not harm the confidentiality of each case. Dave Etheridge also undertook to explore the any opportunities for the Council to have a greater input into commenting on planning applications with regard to flooding issues.

10/13 DEATH CERTIFICATION

(Agenda No. 6)

Jacque Bugeja provided a verbal update on the Death Certifications Reforms and Introduction of Medical Examiners. The consultation period on this change was due to have opened but it is not now expected to commence until March, although implementation is still expected in April 2013. The purpose of the change is to introduce medical examiners to improve the accuracy of mortality statistics and to prevent a reoccurrence of Shipman. The examiners will be funded from the introduction of a fee payable by the bereaved at the time the death is registered. This would be nationally set and transparent. It would not be part of the funeral directors costs. Last year there were 4,000 deaths that would have been effected by this fee if it were levied. Therefore there is a significant financial and reputational risk to the council. Councillors are encouraged to use the consultation period, when it is opened, to feedback their concerns.

11/13 FORWARD PLAN

(Agenda No. 7)

There were no comments regarding the Forward Plan.

12/13 DRAFT OFRS STRATEGIC INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2013/18 & INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN - ACTION PLAN 2013/14

(Agenda No. 8)

Nathan Travis, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, spoke to the paper Draft OFRS Strategic Integrated Risk Management Plan 2013/18 & Integrated Risk Management Plan – Action Plan 2013/14, giving a summary of the consultation feedback and taking questions. This year there were 200 responses, a significant improvement on previous years.

- Risks at Home
OFRS continue to support the use of sprinklers in domestic buildings, but there is no statutory requirement to fit them. Other extinguishing technologies are also being explored for use in buildings over a certain height.
- Risks at Work
OFRS operate a risk based inspection of business property. Businesses with a higher fire risk are inspected more frequently than lower risk properties.
- Risks while Travelling
Feedback on the plan was supportive of the plans for road safety education, with particular emphasis being put on the need to educate adult cyclists. OFRS are working closely with the Police, Economy & Environment Directorate and other partners to understand the cause and effect of road traffic collisions and to explore the potential to share buildings, where appropriate.
- Heritage Risks
OFRS work with owners of heritage properties to mitigate the potential impact of fire damage on properties. They also have specific plans to deal with any fires at certain significant sites.
- Extreme Risks
The feedback from the consultation was supportive of the proactive approach taken by OFRS to respond to extreme risks, such as flooding.

The committee agreed the recommendation to adopt the plans subject to full cabinet approval.

13/13 OXFORDSHIRE SAFER COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP BUSINESS PLAN REPORT

(Agenda No. 9)

Carys Alty, Safer Communities Unit Manager, gave a presentation on the Oxfordshire Safer Communities Partnership Business Plan. The report focused on the six emerging themes that have been developed from the strategic intelligence assessment:

- Anti-social Behaviour
- Domestic Abuse
- Acquisitive Crime
- Violent Crime
- Road Traffic Accidents
- Reducing Re-Offending

The presentation also covered the development of a performance framework to monitor progress in relation to the themes and the work that the partnership are doing to develop a commissioning framework able to respond to the community safety needs of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The committee discussed the difficulty of balancing the needs to respond to the concerns of local communities with broader community safety issues, such as child sexual exploitation, drug and alcohol abuse and reducing the fear of crime. The relationship between the partnership and the Police and Crime Commissioner was also discussed and the Chairman confirmed that the Police & Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable would be attending the next meeting of this committee to introduce their plans for 2013/14. Reports of the Police and Crime Panel meetings are available online and the Chairman also confirmed that Councillor Mallon had been invited to attend the next meeting of this committee to explain the work of the panel.

14/13 VILLAGE HALL AND COMMUNITY CENTRE GRANTS POLICY
(Agenda No. 10)

Karen Warren, Cultural Services Manager, introduced the report. The grant scheme eligibility covers halls in both urban and rural areas. There are very clear and concise criteria, publically available on the website, and through ORCC. Decisions are made by Councillor Heathcoat at delegated decision meetings and are open for all members to attend. Karen emphasised the investment on need basis on which decisions were made but explained that they were reliant on which requests came forward. This explains why there are more grants made in some areas than others. Members were concerned “that the criteria relating to buildings having to be made available for public use for 21 years after the grant were made”, may exclude some organisations from applying. This criteria is in place to ensure that “good value for money” can be obtained from the use of public money and that local communities benefit from the improvements for a significant period of time.

15/13 COUNCILLOR COMMUNITY BUDGETS
(Agenda No. 11)

Claire Phillips, Senior Performance and Policy Officer, introduced the paper and explained that the deadline for committing spends for this budget was the end of February. To date 64% of the funds have been allocated and 36% remains. 7 councillors have yet to allocate any of their funds, although five of these are well on the way to submitting complete applications. 16 councillors have allocated all of their funds. Over half of councillors have spent at least 75% of their fund. From the total amount of grants made, 91% were for projects of less than £3,000 and these projects were wide ranging and supported a wide range of communities. Most of the groups supported were well established but it is possible to use the fund to support and benefit new groups. The majority of the funds were used to support sports groups, outdoor play spaces and activities for both young and old people across the county.

The committee discussed the scheme, agreeing that it was a positive scheme, and easy to make applications to. They also suggested that a way to remove any barriers

to spending would be to promote the scheme more widely at the launch and to support members to develop networks and reach out to new groups.

16/13 CLOSE OF MEETING

(Agenda No. 12)

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

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Division(s): All

ITEM

SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 22nd April 2013

Doorstep Crime Update

Report by John Jackson

Introduction

1. The Trading Standards Service has led the response to doorstep crime in the county over the last few years. The term 'doorstep crime' has no formal definition but is applied to categorise a type of incident normally involving an individual or group of individuals providing home improvement or repair work. Frequently the work is solicited by way of a cold-call to private homes, and little or no paperwork is provided. The harm arises from a range of practices, including making false claims that work is required to the property to obtain the owners agreement to a contract, escalating the cost and extent of work once small scale works have been agreed, making false claims about the extent of the work actually carried out to justify increased demands for payment and occasionally starting work without permission and using intimidation to ensure that payment is made. Frequently, no details are left of the business that carried out the work and any details provided are often false. The victim is often an older person.
2. A dedicated team provides an immediate response to reported incidents of doorstep crime with the primary aim of preventing consumer loss to this type of fraud. By intervening in the incident before payment is made the team can support the consumer, preventing them from being intimidated into making unnecessary payments. The team also investigates incidents and prepares reports to enable formal legal action to be instigated where appropriate. This team consists of three Trading Standards staff and a seconded Police Officer.
3. This paper provides a summary of the current situation concerning doorstep crime in the County and an overview of the approach taken by the Trading Standards Doorstep Crime Team.

Exempt Information

4. None

Doorstep Crime Overview

5. Trading Standards seeks to tackle doorstep crime in a number of ways. Firstly, the primary role of the Doorstep Crime Team is to respond to incidents, intervening directly to prevent losses where the property owner needs support. This immediate response is necessary since the suspects tend to seek to complete work and obtain payment in a short-period to reduce the chances of the victim seeking support. In 2011/12 direct intervention in incidents saved Oxfordshire consumers £130k.
6. From this intervention work the team will seek to investigate any suspected criminal offences with a view to preventing repeat incidents.
7. Investigating the incidents can be complex and time consuming. The victims are often older people and the suspects frequently take steps to avoid identification. The joint approach with the Police is particularly important helping to ensure a rapid response to incidents. In addition, there are strong links between doorstep crime and other types of criminality and therefore linking intelligence can lead to the identification of suspects who would not otherwise be traced.
8. Alongside the enforcement approach adopted by the Trading Standards Service we also seek to reduce the likelihood of a person being victimised through prevention and awareness raising work. Of particular note are the continued support provided for No Cold Calling Zones which empower people to refuse to speak with cold-callers. We are currently working to extend these zones into park home sites which have been targeted recently by rogue traders.
9. There is no central collation of doorstep crime data across agencies at this time. We have started to try and address this in order to ensure that an accurate assessment of the level of this type of crime can be made which will allow comparisons to be made with other types of offences.
10. Using Trading Standards held data we project that there will be in the region of 400 doorstep crime incidents identified in 2012/13. This compares with 480 in 2011/12 and 524 the previous year. The slight downward trend in identified incidents is encouraging but no conclusions can be drawn on the reason for this trend and whether it will continue.
11. Significant recent outcomes include the prosecution of Jason Butcher who was originally identified on the BBC Rogue Traders programme. Mr Butcher cold-called and offered tree surgery work. He was prosecuted for work that he did at 5 locations which was shown to be either overcharged, not completed or unnecessary. In particular he claimed that trees on the property were infected with a fungus when they were not. The age of his victims ranged from 55 to 94 years. He was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment.

Joint work with Thames Valley Police

12. The response to doorstep crime could equally be led by Trading Standards or the Police. The type of offending involved in doorstep crime incidents often includes fraud, criminal damage and theft. However, consumer protection offences are a common thread through most incidents (e.g. false statements made in relation to work carried out or failure to provide legally required documentation). The most effective response therefore involves a multi-agency approach which is recognised through the joint Police/ Trading Standards team based in the Trading Standards Service.
13. A joint enforcement approach allows consumer protection legislation, which is commonly breached in doorstep crime incidents, to be applied alongside the kind of investigatory techniques necessary for effective detection of this type of crime. This includes scenes of crime facilities, finger print analysis, DNA matching and formal identification facilities. Most importantly, the joint approach ensures that suspects can be arrested and bailed, providing for more effective investigations. The officer is able to draw in support from local Neighbourhood Teams when required. This can be very effective in providing on-going support for victims after an incident.
14. The joint team includes a Police Officer seconded from Thames Valley Police. The Trading Standards Service pays for this seconded officer. As well as providing an effective link across agencies, in recent years the seconded Police Officer has brought to the team skills necessary for interviewing vulnerable witnesses. This can be essential when the victim has underlying health conditions, e.g. dementia.
15. Alongside the joint enforcement response we are currently seeking to develop a clearer referral and response mechanism across the different disciplines within each organisation. In particular, it is recognised that there are clear links between our work on doorstep crime and the work of the Police Economic Crime Unit and Financial Abuse Safeguarding Team. This will be a focus of our development work through 2013/14.

Regional and National Links

16. Our local work links to, and is supported by, regional and national enforcement projects. Most local authority Trading Standards Services will seek to tackle doorstep crime to some extent. We have strong links to neighbouring authorities and share intelligence through a regional intelligence database. This ensures suspects working across local authority boundaries are identified and enforcement action is coordinated.

17. In addition there is support available for investigations of cross-boundary cases from the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills. We have accessed some of this funding to support investigations into incidents arising in Oxfordshire but which are also replicated in other local authority areas. In 2012/13 we received £10k funding for these cases.
18. Since April 2012 the National Trading Standards Board has had responsibility for tackling national consumer protection priorities. This Board is currently analysing available information in order to identify these national enforcement priorities and has funding available to tackle these. It is possible that doorstep crime will be identified as a national priority and if this is the case we will need to link our local work to national programmes.

Further Protecting Vulnerable People Activities

19. The Trading Standards Service has committed to support a regional project concerning postal scams. The project, which is coordinated through another local authority, seeks to tackle postal scams through better coordination of intelligence concerning victims. Through linking with the National Anti-Fraud Network, Royal Mail and other organisations scams victims will be identified and notified to local Trading Standards Services. We will then seek to contact the suspected victim and provide support to enable them to reduce their losses to scams. Information on these scams will then be collated and used to better inform enforcement and awareness raising work.

Recommendations

20. Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny are asked to note the contents and comment on areas for future development of the Trading Standards Doorstep Crime Team

NAME: John Jackson
Director for Social and Community Services

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

March 2013

SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 22ND APRIL 2013

FLOOD RESPONSE

Report by Bethan Morgan, County Emergency Planning Officer

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the county-wide response plans that are in place with regard to flooding and look ahead at how these will change following learning from recent flooding events.

Background

1. In 2011, a Joint Severe Weather Plan was adopted by Oxfordshire County Council, the District and City Councils that outlines a common approach to adverse weather events. The plan is maintained by the emergency planning leads collectively of these authorities with the support of key partner agencies such as police, fire, ambulance and the Environment Agency.
2. The aim of the plan is to outline the joint emergency response arrangements across Oxfordshire councils in response to severe weather. This includes a framework for the responsibilities of both County Council and District Councils in terms of activation, allocation and deployment of resources. The plan complements a number of existing Oxfordshire emergency plans and should be read in conjunction with those.
3. The plan deals with a number of severe weather scenarios; gales/storms, winter weather such as snow/ice/fog, heavy rain/flooding, heatwave and drought. These have been identified in the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment and furthermore assessed as risks within the Thames Valley Community Risk Register.
4. The following sections outline the activation processes and key structures relating to flooding in particular and how plans are changing in response to learning from past flooding events.

Activation criteria

5. As with all plans, the Severe Weather Plan includes activation criteria and in the case of flooding, these are generally:
 - Amber or Red severe weather warning – Met Office National Severe Weather Warning Service;
 - Amber or Red risk – Flood Guidance Statement
 - Flood Warning or Severe Weather Warning – EA Flood Warning
 - Notification from partner agency or internal service
 - Visual observations from the public received and verified

6. Once the activation criteria has been reached, a multi-agency teleconference will be organised to assess the potential likelihood and impact upon the county and consider appropriate action to take. The initial teleconference will include all of the local authorities as well as specialist teams from within OCC and external advisers such as the Met Office.

Coordination

7. Within OCC, this activation triggers generic actions outlined in the County Emergency Plan which cascades information to all directorates and specialist teams such as Communications. An internal teleconference is held which considers what structures are required internally to deal with both the flood response and the business continuity actions required.
8. Within the County Council, specialist cells such as the severe weather desk in Highways are established, as well as the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) and each directorate's crisis management cell if required. Once established, the EOC provides coordination of response with external partners both within Oxfordshire and the rest of Thames Valley.

Multi-agency response

9. Activation of the Joint Severe Weather Plan triggers similar activity across the Oxfordshire local authorities, with internal measures such as EOCs, business continuity arrangements and resources being placed on standby in readiness for emergency response.
10. The plan recognises that each local authority will have its own resources and set of policies for responding to flooding. For example, established sand-bag shelters in some districts that are maintained with community support or pre-identified locations where sand and bags may be dropped at appropriate times.
11. The benefit of the joint plan is that these separate resources can be collectively reviewed and deployed to support the response. In the flooding event of November 2012, not only did the response trigger the opening of community sandbag stores but in the case of OCC highways, sandbags could be pre-deployed to known surface-water problem areas to support the local community. The use of multi-agency teleconferences and good communication streams between EOCs and emergency responders means that at-risk areas can be identified and appropriate action agreed between partners.

Community resilience

12. The local response to flooding is based upon a tiered approach starting with personal and community resilience through to emergency response by the traditional emergency responding organisations.

13. The emergency planning unit (EPU) has worked with the District and City councils, the Environment Agency and OCC services to promote community resilience to individuals and communities. This work was initially led by the EA after the 2007 floods; encouraging flooded communities to produce community flood plans. In the past 3 years, the EPU and partners have promoted the development of multi-use community emergency plans to Parish and Town Councils and in the future, to Parish Meeting areas as well. One of the outputs from these efforts has been a database of locations that can be used by the community in the case of evacuation. During the floods of 2012, the database was successfully used to identify appropriate locations for rest centres in Abingdon and Henley.
14. The promotion of community emergency plans is an ongoing project and work is underway, particularly in the Oxford City area, to support communities that had previously produced flood plans to revisit these and review their contents to ensure they identify action to be taken during flooding events. Work is also underway with the City Council to identify how community resilience should be promoted to non-parished areas which, in other districts, provide a basic structure for this promotion activity.
15. The work undertaken by the emergency planning teams within local authorities is undertaken in consultation with OCC Highways and Drainage teams to encourage the adoption of community emergency plans where flood alleviation and management activities are being discussed.
16. One of the areas for development following recent flood events is the role of volunteers in the community to act as points of information and intelligence. In a limited number of locations within the County, flood wardens had been recruited by the EA but the number of these has reduced over time. Discussions are underway between partners to establish if community-based volunteers could be recruited to act during emergency events (not just flooding) to support community resilience and be a source of local intelligence.

Improving intelligence of flood-risk

17. Every flooding event provides responders with more information about at-risk locations which is useful in profiling the resources and actions required to respond. Each agency with responsibility for collating data (such as the EA or OCC under the Flood and Water Management Act) is able to use this historic data during a response to assess the impact of flooding events upon the community. As these systems are introduced, testing in real-time is proving useful to refine and improve their usage. These sources include:
 - The widespread use of the new EA flood warning codes to publicise flood risk – introduced in 2011, the 3 stages of warnings are becoming familiar, as are the recommended actions to be taken.
 - Improved use of EA Flood Warnings Direct with smaller catchment areas to provide flood risk information direct to registered properties.

Following feedback, some of the areas will be reviewed by the EA in the next year to improve the targeting of warnings.

- Web-based river levels and live flood warning maps provide a clear picture of how watercourses are responding to weather events. The EA is reviewing some telemetry sites and how information is provided following observations from partners but overall, these have improved how both responders and residents access information.
- OCC EPU is currently testing a new service offered to partners by the EA to register key sites so that alerts are received if these sites are at risk of flooding; this is a targeted service which should assist OCC in identifying locations such as schools, care establishments and fire stations when at risk, thus providing an opportunity to protect these sites or invoke appropriate business continuity plans.
- The weather events of 2012/13 provided an opportunity to improve usage of social media to provide information on disruption (such as road closures) to the public. The speed of resources such as Twitter proved useful in increasing communication - not only to those people with Twitter accounts, but was used to inform media partners for onward communication via more traditional outlets such as radio.

Learning from flooding events

18. Plans are reviewed in response to post-incident debriefs and lessons identified. The Joint Severe Weather Plan is reviewed annually prior to the onset of winter and lessons from the flooding and snow events of winter 2012/13 will be incorporated in the next review. This review schedule permits all of the partners involved in the plan to consider amendments required not only to that plan, but also to their own internal processes and plans as well as improvements to systems or policies that have been made by the wider responder community. This also provides an opportunity to make amendments to our complementary plans to ensure the full suite of plans is current and reflect learning and best practice.

19. The Scrutiny Committee is RECOMMENDED to:

- a) note the report.**

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee 22/04/13

IRMP 2012/13 – Project 5:- A joint review by Officers & Members, of the issues causing challenges in maintaining “On Call” cover at Fire Stations and proposed actions to enhance availability.

Introduction

Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service (OFRS) currently has 24 fire stations covering the county and is seen as one of the most cost-effective services in the country – a position it has been able to maintain in the past by its extensive use of on-call firefighters.

In Oxfordshire, 18 of those fire stations are staffed solely by on-call firefighters and the other six have a blend of on-call and full-time resources. As a whole, OFRS employs 243 full time firefighters and operational officers – and up to 375 on-call firefighters and supervisory operational officers. In effect, the on-call duty system is the backbone of the service locally and allows it to continue to innovate and improve, despite the pressures of the government’s austerity programme.

Furthermore, the on-call duty system is seen by central government as a good example of ‘Big Society’ in action and has been the focus of challenge in recent years to larger Fire and Rescue Services who either do not use it or who only use it in a limited fashion - in relation to both their operating models and their planned efficiencies.

However, changes to the system nationally over the last 10 years (such as limiting individual standard cover to 120 hours per week and the increasing impact on budgets of both the Part-Time Workers Regulations and changes to national pensions schemes) – together with local pressures identified below - have created significant challenges in OFRS to maintaining the system effectively.

Therefore, this Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) project looked at alternative options available to provide additional resilience and revised operational models to continue to deliver efficient and effective on-call Fire and Rescue Service resources within projected budgetary constraints.

OFRS on-call personnel are aligned to locality working (i.e. they must live and/or work within 5 minutes of a Fire Station) and provide an effective way of delivering Fire & Rescue Service obligations in a rural environment. Recruitment pressures have caused challenges in availability, particularly as a result of the economic climate, which has resulted in employers being less likely to release their employees to fulfil firefighting duties during their working day.

Additionally, societal expectations have changed and individuals place more value an effective work/life balance, this has caused difficulties in providing resilient availability, particularly at weekends.

OFRS officers and Safer and Stronger Communities (SSC) Scrutiny members looked

at models currently being utilised by other Fire & Rescue Services (Kent and Derbyshire) that have the potential to maintain the existing Fire & Rescue Service provision, as well as promoting new ways of working and making the best use of our resources, whilst at the same time, supporting an appropriate balance between work, standby and leisure time. This could be supported through implementing a number of options highlighted in the recommendations detailed as part of this report.

Members also visited a number of Oxfordshire's on-call Fire Stations – Witney, Woodstock, Faringdon and Henley. These stations have a number of challenges in relation to recruitment and retention and the ability to maintain availability. Members were able to question on-call firefighters and seek feedback regarding viable options to assist the station's particular needs.

The review of other models, the visits to on-call stations, the advice of officers and feedback from members has been combined and condensed into an executive summary and recommendations detailed below.

This review sets out to examine alternative options that have the potential to provide additional resilience and revised operational models to deliver an effective Fire and Rescue Service response across Oxfordshire particularly in more rural communities - where difficulties are currently being encountered in recruiting and retaining on-call firefighters.

This review builds upon the report by the Community Safety Scrutiny Committee in April 2008, which made recommendations regarding the recruitment and retention of Retained Firefighters (as on-call firefighters were referred to at the time).

Recommendations

- 1.1 **Creation of logo for letterheads for local business** - this recommendation would allow local employers supporting their local Fire Stations to display a logo that indicates their commitment to their local community.
- 1.2 **Review/utilise over the border resources where appropriate** – This is already carried out as part of reciprocal arrangements. But would benefit from a review in conjunction with the Thames Valley Fire Control Project to ensure that the nearest appropriate asset is mobilised to an incident dependent on station availability and irrespective of County boundaries.
- 1.3 **More flexible use of full-time and on-call operational personnel** - This would involve new crewing models with personnel providing additional support to cover all of the County's Fire Stations and maintain availability.

- 1.4 Using core On-Call personnel to maintain cover by combining resources** - this recommendation is based upon a Kent Fire and Rescue Service model. It would mean that On-Call personnel could be paid to work core hours on a particular station. This could be attractive to individuals who do not have primary employment and would result in a pro-rata salary for key individuals who are maintaining emergency response cover.
- 1.5 Review cover locations as part of the Emergency Response Cover Review report** - The report will provide an indication on which to base future planning assumptions.
- 1.6 Create a payment scale based on availability** – Currently there are two levels of remuneration for on-call personnel - one level for those committing to 120hrs per week on-call and another level for those offering 119hrs or less. The intention is to explore the possibility to more effectively reward those individuals giving a greater degree of cover.
- 1.7 Reinvigorate the title 'On-Call' as opposed to Retained Duty Systems** - this is a national issue which has not been widely adopted. This will be re-visited.
- 1.8 Greater engagement with local business/politicians** - engagement with Councillors is already in place via the quarterly updates issued by the Fire Risk Managers. These updates will be simplified with the potential for the document to be circulated to local businesses via local Councillors.
- 1.9 Explore options to further improve staff retention**- this could be improved with the introduction of an incentive based system. Our recruitment challenges would be reduced if we were able to retain existing On-Call personnel. Feedback from the Retained Charter will be used to explore further incentives to increase retention.
- 1.10 Explore future opportunities with the Business Community to release On-Call firefighters** – With the development of the Local Enterprise Partnerships and increasing Central Government funding for local business initiatives there is an opportunity to explore incentives for local businesses to release their staff for Fire and Rescue Service duties.
- 1.11 Increase the added value of On-Call firefighters through specialist skills such as Trauma Care** - this will enhance a valuable asset within the local community and in turn, be of benefit to local employers through enhanced skills. This has the potential to increase the number of calls

personnel are mobilised to and therefore improve morale and thus retention.

Recommendation:-

1. The Committee is RECOMMENDED to note the contents of the executive summary and support the implementation of the recommendations, thus fulfilling the requirement of IRMP 2012/13 Project 5:- To review alternative options available to provide resilience for our on call stations and revised operational models to deliver an efficient and effective Fire and Rescue Service within projected budgetary constraints
2. The Committee is RECOMMENDED to task the Chief Fire Officer with creating and implementing an action plan based on the recommendations within this report

David Etheridge

Chief Fire Officer

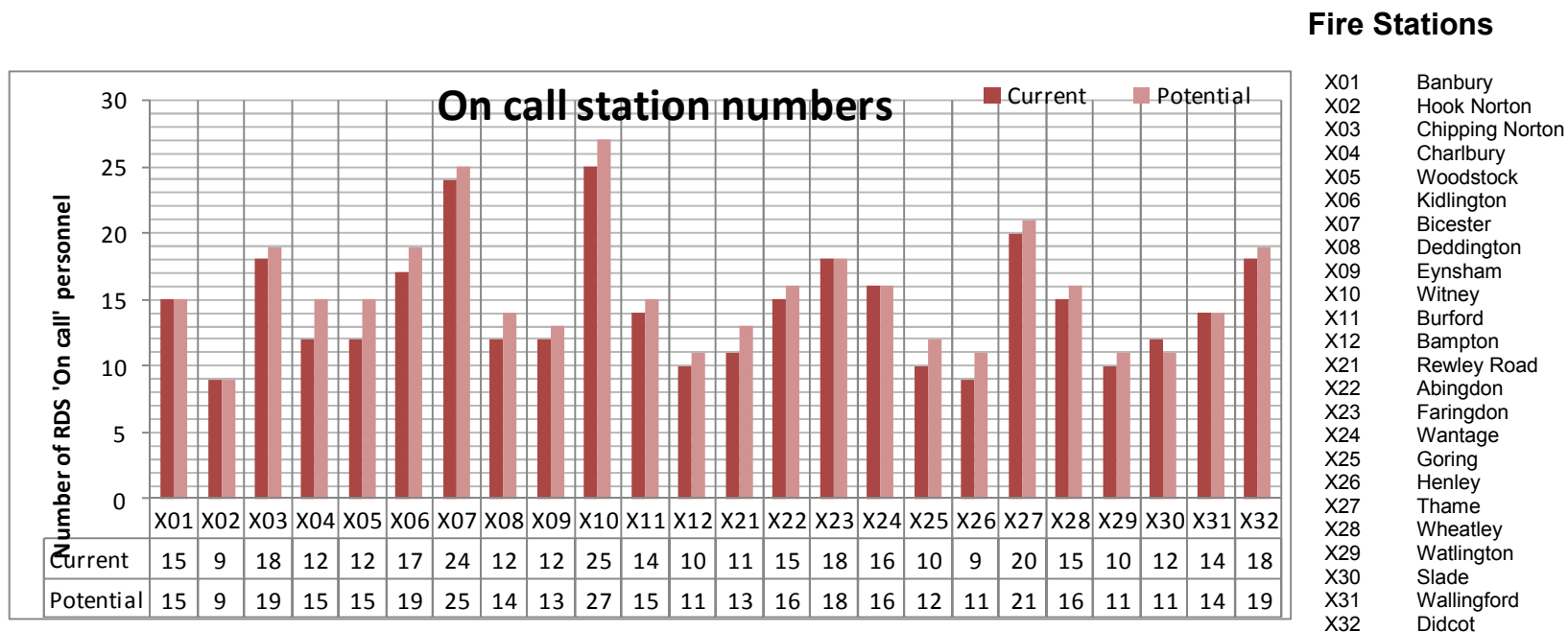
Contact Officer: Nigel Wilson (Tel: 01865 852171)

Appendix 1 – data to support current “On Call” recruitment strategies

The table below is an illustration of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service’s (OFRS) “on call” fire-fighter numbers on our 24 fire stations.

Currently we have 348 “on call” personnel and we are working to increase this to 375 by July 2013 – this figure may vary dependant on the numbers of personnel who successfully complete the basic training course and those that leave the service.

For continuity purposes some “on call” stations are over the indicative establishment levels of 15 personnel for a 1 pump station and 23 personnel for a 2 pump station – this is due to the Service recognising the impact on appliance availability when a member of “on call” staff retires or leaves the service, as it takes between 18 – 24 months for an “on call” firefighter to gain the appropriate qualifications to make a difference to appliance crewing and thus appliance availability – this is due to the time an individual is contracted to and able to give for training purposes. Through station profiling every effort is made look forward and predict leavers and where possible to recruit to mitigate the impact on stations and crewing. Additionally a number of our stations have specialist vehicles which require enhanced crewing levels.



Note:- the “potential” figure referred to in the above graph relates to current recruitment numbers and the potential number of personnel who will be on station if they are all successful in completing basic training.

The following chart details the turnover rate for RDS 'On call' personnel in OFRS for the last 7 years. We have lost between 34 and 45 people per year with an average turnover rate of 12%.

We have improved our retention rate from 7 to 9 years in the past few years, this along with on-going recruitment is allowing us to maintain a steady 'on call' establishment of between 340 – 370 personnel.

For 2013 we have currently 17 trainee "on call" firefighters on a basic firefighting course in March 2013, and a scheduled selection day in March for "on call" fire fighters which will feed a July 2013 basic course of 10 trainees, with 2 further selection days planned for 20 more "on call" fire fighting posts in 2013. This should enhance our existing "on call" establishment and meet the potential of a loss of up to 45 "on call" firefighters.

NOTE:- It is worth noting that because of the nature of cover required at "on call" fire stations, the cover given varies from firefighter to firefighter and these posts should not be seen as full time equivalent roles, carefully scrutiny of the numbers of "on call" personnel is maintained to ensure that all costs are contained within existing budgets.

