



Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Public Health, Inequalities & Community Safety

Tuesday, 2 July 2024 at 1.00 pm

Room 3 - County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND

If you wish to view proceedings, please click on this [Live Stream Link](#).
However, that will not allow you to participate in the meeting.

Items for Decision

The items for decision under individual Cabinet Members' delegated powers are listed overleaf, with indicative timings, and the related reports are attached. Decisions taken will become effective at the end of the working day on Tuesday 9 July 2024 unless called in by that date for review by the appropriate Scrutiny Committee.

Copies of the reports are circulated (by e-mail) to all members of the County Council.

These proceedings are open to the public

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Reeves".

Martin Reeves
Chief Executive

June 2024

Committee Officer: **Democratic Services Team**
committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Note: *Date of next meeting: 3 September 2024*

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, but please give as much notice as possible before the meeting.

Items for Decision

1. Declarations of Interest

See guidance below.

2. Questions from County Councillors

Any county councillor may, by giving notice to the Proper Officer by 9 am two working days before the meeting, ask a question on any matter in respect of the Cabinet Member's delegated powers.

The number of questions which may be asked by any councillor at any one meeting is limited to two (or one question with notice and a supplementary question at the meeting) and the time for questions will be limited to 30 minutes in total. As with questions at Council, any questions which remain unanswered at the end of this item will receive a written response.

Questions submitted prior to the agenda being despatched are shown below and will be the subject of a response from the appropriate Cabinet Member or such other councillor or officer as is determined by the Cabinet Member, and shall not be the subject of further debate at this meeting. Questions received after the despatch of the agenda, but before the deadline, will be shown on the Schedule of Addenda circulated at the meeting, together with any written response which is available at that time.

3. Petitions and Public Address

Members of the public who wish to speak at this meeting can attend the meeting in person or 'virtually' through an online connection.

Requests to speak must be submitted by no later than 9am four working days before the meeting. Requests to speak should be sent to committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk .

If you are speaking 'virtually', you may submit a written statement of your presentation to ensure that if the technology fails, then your views can still be taken into account. A written copy of your statement can be provided no later than 9 am 2 working days before the meeting. Written submissions should be no longer than 1 A4 sheet.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Pages 1 - 2)

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2024 to be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

5. Automatic Fire Alarm Attendance Policy (Pages 3 - 32)

Cabinet Member: Public Health, Inequalities and Community Safety

Forward Plan Ref: 2024/148

Contact: Jason Crapper, Area Manager

Jason.crapper@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Report by Chief Fire Officer and Director of Community Safety (**CMDPHICS5**)

The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to:

Note the results of the consultation exercise as set out in this report and the consultation report attached at Appendix Two, and delegate authority to the Chief Fire Officer to:

- a) **Select amongst the proposed automatic fire alarm response options as deemed appropriate following discussions with other Thames Valley fire and rescue services; and**
- b) **To elevate building types into a higher risk category, either temporarily or on a permanent basis, to manage an identified risk posed by that type of building in the future.**

6. Supplementary Substance Misuse Service Contract (Pages 33 - 40)

Cabinet Member: Public Health, Inequalities and Community Safety

Forward Plan Ref: 2024/196

Contact: Kate Holburn, Head of Public Health Programmes

Kate.Holburn@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Report by Director of Public Health and Inequalities (**CMDPHICS6**)

The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to:

- a) **Approve the contract extension, via the appropriate legal route, for the Supplementary Substance Misuse Service, provided by Turning Point, for a period of 3 years.**

Councillors declaring interests

General duty

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed 'Declarations of Interest' or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your employment; sponsorship (i.e. payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

Declaring an interest

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member 'must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself' and that 'you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned'.

Members Code – Other registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your other registerable interests then you must declare an interest. You must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and you must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person's quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing.

Other registrable interests include:

- a) Any unpaid directorships

- b) Any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority.
- c) Any body (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

Members Code – Non-registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to your financial interest or wellbeing (and does not fall under disclosable pecuniary interests), or the financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate, you must declare the interest.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects your own financial interest or wellbeing, a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate or a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under other registrable interests, then you must declare the interest.

In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied:

Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

- a) to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b) a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest.

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

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Agenda Item 4

DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH, INEQUALITIES & COMMUNITY SAFETY

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 4 June 2024 commencing at 1.00 pm and finishing at 1.13 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Dr Nathan Ley – in the Chair

Officers: Jack Ahier (Democratic Services Officer), Mike Adcock (Area Manager C - Business and Transformation), Jo Bowcock (Deputy Chief Fire Officer).

The Cabinet Member 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.

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Agenda No. 1)

None.

2 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

(Agenda No. 2)

None.

3 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda No. 3)

None.

4 FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE APPLIANCE TENDER

(Agenda No. 4)

The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting. The Chair noted that the decision was to approve the award of a contract for pumping appliances and delegations to officers.

The Chair noted the impact of unavailability through maintenance work, for example, and stressed the need to manage this effectively.

The Chair thanked officers for their work and approved the recommendation in the report.

RESOLVED to:

- a) Approve the delegation of contract award decision for the provision of Pumping Appliances, to the Corporate Director for Public Health, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, having followed a fully compliant procurement process.**

..... in the Chair

Date of signing 02/07/2024

Divisions Affected – All divisions

DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH, INEQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

02 July 2024

Automatic Fire Alarm Attendance Policy – Post Consultation

Report by Chief Fire Officer and Director of Community Safety

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to:**

Note the results of the consultation exercise as set out in this report and the consultation report attached at Appendix Two, and delegate authority to the Chief Fire Officer to:

- a) **select amongst the proposed automatic fire alarm response options as deemed appropriate following discussions with other Thames Valley fire and rescue services; and**
- b) **to elevate building types into a higher risk category, either temporarily or on a permanent basis, to manage an identified risk posed by that type of building in the future.**

Executive Summary

2. This paper provides an update following the recent public consultation that has been conducted concerning changes to the Fire and Rescue Service's automatic fire alarm mobilisation policy and procedure. The paper highlights that general agreement with the proposals was amongst the consultation feedback and that there is sufficient support for each of the options to give latitude to enable either of the proposed options to be selected. Furthermore, that the decision regarding which option to pursue is driven as much by the need to ensure operational alignment across Thames Valley and therefore that the Chief Fire Officer requires the delegated authority to select the appropriate option in negotiation with other Thames Valley partners.

Background

3. The Fire and Rescue Service's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) for 2022-2026 identified that we would be working with our fire and rescue partners across Thames Valley to reduce the number of false alarms that we attend.
4. At a delegated decisions meeting on 09 January 2024, the Cabinet Member for Public Health Inequalities and Community Safety authorised the Chief Fire Officer to proceed to a public consultation for changes to the Fire and Rescue Service's

automatic fire alarm attendance policy. This decision was underpinned by the service demonstrating a need to reduce the number of false alarms from automatic fire alarms that it attends for reasons of efficiency, effectiveness, and economy. The report underpinning this decision can be found at appendix 1.

5. This decision followed several months of discussion, incident data analysis and policy proposal development amongst the three Thames Valley fire and rescue services as part of an agreed collaborative approach to aligning fire alarm mobilisation procedures through their joint Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS).
6. A public consultation took place in Oxfordshire between 4 March 2024 and 13 May 2024 with the primary target audience being employees of the Fire and Rescue Service together with business, non-profit and local/central government organisations. A post consultation report has been completed that describes the approach taken in the consultation and sets out an analysis of the responses and feedback received. Some metrics and feedback relevant to this delegated decision will be taken from that report which can be found embedded at appendix 2.

Key Issues

7. In total, we received 135 responses to the public consultation, of which 131 responded directly via the online survey. The make-up of the respondents was broad with, amongst others, business, residents and employees of the Fire and Rescue Service represented.
8. The majority of respondents agreed that there was a need for the Fire and Rescue Service to change its approach to attending automatic fire alarm activations. A similar proportion also agreed with the proposals for categorising building risk and the proposed approach to attending all fire alarm activations in high-risk buildings.
9. A smaller majority of respondents also agreed with proposals for not attending fire alarm activations in low-risk buildings at any time of the day.
10. Respondents were asked to offer their views about the three discrete fire alarm response options in table 1:

Table 1 - Fire alarm response options from public consultation

Option A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to attend automatic fire alarm activations in higher-risk and medium-risk buildings. • Not attend low-risk buildings 24 hours a day unless there is a fire or there are signs of fire.
Option B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to attend automatic fire alarm activations in higher-risk buildings. • Not attend low-risk buildings 24 hours a day unless there is a fire or there are signs of fire. • Not attend medium-risk buildings between 9am and 6pm only unless there is a fire or there are signs of fire.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend automatic fire alarm incidents in medium-risk buildings outside of these times unless the building is occupied and there are no signs of fire.
Option C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to attend automatic fire alarm activations in higher-risk buildings. Not attend automatic fire alarm systems for both low and medium-risk buildings 24 hours a day unless there is a fire or there are signs of fire.

11. The survey responses indicated that there was support for all options although this was not evenly distributed. Due to the absence of a 'do nothing' option in the survey, those 16 respondents that either 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' with the need for change generally expressed a desire for an attendance by the fire and rescue service to still be made. With their responses removed from the figures, the feedback indicates that Option B was the most popular with 65 preferences, Option A was the second most popular with 21 preferences and Option C was the third most popular with 26 preferences.
12. The Fire Brigades Union's (FBU) provided a written response to the consultation (see letter embedded at appendix 3) which did not provide responses to the questions posed in the survey. However, their response was not in favour of the proposals, citing a risk to firefighters, fire control staff and local communities. They also indicated that rather than not attending fire alarm activations, fire and rescue services should *"demand more resources and extra capacity to deal with [Automatic Fire Alarms] AFAs safely and properly"*. The Fire Brigades Union also voiced concern that the public were consulted at the same time as themselves rather than pre-public-consultation arrangements being put in place for themselves.
13. The service has since responded back to the FBU following their feedback and to address the concerns they raised (see appendix 4).
14. Survey respondents also clearly outlined that, should any of the proposals be taken forward, there is a strong need and desire for there to be a high-profile campaign and strong stakeholder support to ensure that organisations are aware and ready for the changes.
15. The Fire and Rescue Service believes that the public consultation feedback supports the adoption of either of the proposed options. Due to the collaborative nature of the project, the need to ensure operational alignment via TVFCS is felt to be the biggest driver as to which option is ultimately selected. This requires an element of negotiation amongst the three Thames Valley fire and rescue services. It is therefore recommended that the Chief Fire Officer is given delegated authority to select amongst the consultation options as deemed appropriate following discussion and negotiation with the other Thames Valley fire and rescue services. Furthermore, that the Chief Fire Officer also be given the authority to elevate building types into a higher risk category, either temporarily or on a permanent basis, to manage an identified risk posed by that type of building in the future.

Benefits

16. The benefits that would be realised by implementing a revised automatic fire alarm policy will clearly be dependent on which of the proposals is taken forward. The general benefits for the communities of Oxfordshire are as follows:
- Reduction in false alarms being attended by the Fire and Rescue Service.
 - Reduced pay costs associated with a reduction in the mobilising of crews conditioned to the On-Call and day crewing duty systems.
 - Reduced disruption for On-Call primary employment which could improve the retention of On-Call firefighters over the longer term.
 - Increased fire appliance availability to respond to genuine emergency incidents.
 - Increased productivity of Wholetime firefighter crews.
 - Reduced vehicle costs associated with the attending false alarms.
 - Reduced road risk associated with attending automatic fire alarm activations.
 - Reduced vehicle emissions.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

17. Changes to the Fire and Rescue Service's automatic fire alarm attendance policy will allow the fire and rescue service to prioritise its limited resources on more productive tasks, including community safety work, which will enable the service to prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents (priority 9). An additional and indirect benefit will be in the reduction of incidents being attended by the service which will contribute in a small way to help the council address the climate emergency (priority 1).

Financial Implications

18. There are currently no significant costs identified for implementing a revised automatic fire alarm policy that is in line with this report. It is possible that some small costs might be associated with the technical implementation of revised policy within the Thames Valley Fire Control Service. Any such costs will be scoped as the project proceeds but are not expected to be significant and would be shared across the Thames Valley collaboration with the local costs funded within existing service budgets.

Comments checked by:

Stephen Rowles, Finance Business Partner, Stephen.rowles@oxfordshire.gov.uk
(Finance)

Legal Implications

19. There is no strict duty for fire and rescue services to attend automatic fire alarm activations. Any policy that is based on non-attendance would have to be compatible with the statutory duty to make provision (sufficient personnel, services, equipment, effective arrangements for receiving and responding to calls for help and for obtaining

information which the Fire and Rescue Service needs to carry out its functions) for the purposes of:

- (a) Extinguishing fires in its area, and
- (b) Protecting life and property in the event of fires in its areas

20. Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the responsible person has a duty to take general fire precautions. The responsible person includes the owner, employer, landlord, occupier or anyone in a control of the premises. This places the onus on the responsible person to undertake a fire risk assessment and consider if an automatic fire alarm system is required at the premises, ensure it is tested and maintained and take steps to manage false alarms.

Comments checked by:

Paul Grant, Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer,
paul.grant@oxfordshire.gov.uk (Legal)

Staff Implications

21. The staff resources for implementing any new automatic fire alarm attendance policy and supporting procedures would be drawn from the Fire Protection department within the Fire and Rescue Service and with support from our partner fire and rescue services as well as Thames Valley Fire Control Service.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

22. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been drafted and will remain a live document throughout the decision-making process, implementation and during evaluation. At this stage, the EIA indicates that any policy that is aligned with this report would not have any direct or indirect impact on protected groups.

Sustainability Implications

23. A Climate impact Assessment has been drafted and will remain a live document throughout the decision-making process, implementation and during evaluation. This assessment has indicated that any policy changes stemming from this work are only likely to result in a reduction in the incidents attended by the Fire and Rescue Service which will lead to less mileage being undertaken by fire engines and therefore less vehicle emissions. A net positive environmental benefit is therefore anticipated.

Risk Management

24. The main risks associated with the implementation of the any of the proposed changes remain those highlighted in the consultation document which are as per the following table along with the proposed control measures:

Potential Risks	Measures we will take to mitigate any risk
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<p>Increased risk of building damage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are very few fires linked to automatic fire alarms with only approximately 1% leading to a fire and the majority of these require minimal firefighting activity from our firefighters. We will monitor these figures to understand the impacts that any changes to our policy might be having, learn, and adapt our approach. • We will provide responsible persons with advice and guidance. This will include providing advice on considerations for fire protection, evacuation, and the importance of calling 999 if a fire is confirmed. • We will ensure the call challenge process is designed around asking the most relevant questions of the caller and all such calls received will be treated as a priority and should not result in a notable delay in sending fire engines where they are genuinely required.
<p>Increased risk to building occupants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are very few casualties linked to automatic fire alarm activations and we will monitor these figures to understand the impacts that any changes to our policy might be having, learn, and adapt our approach. • The most likely risk to people is when they are asleep and such properties are not within scope within options A or B and would therefore continue to receive an automatic response. • For the other option (C) we regularly check and test the fire safety arrangements of buildings where there is a sleeping risk through our risk-based inspection programme.
<p>Increased risk to firefighter safety if faced with a more developed fire</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our ongoing firefighter training will ensure that we can safely, competently, and effectively deal with the risk of a more developed fire and we will monitor and review incidents, to ensure any lessons are learned. • Increased road risk associated with responding to automatic fire alarms could be argued to exceed any risk to firefighters from more developed fires.
<p>Fire and rescue reputational damage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is felt that because we are pursuing a policy of non-attendance which already exist in several other fire and rescue services, the risk of reputational damage is already minimised. • We will ensure that our final decision considers the feedback of stakeholders and reflects any significant concerns they have. • Any changes we implement following consultation will be done through a carefully planned and managed approach, which will include working with and preparing stakeholders who may be directly affected.
<p>Increased difficulty to recruit and retain firefighters on the On-Call duty system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While a reduction in incident may impact firefighters on our on-call duty system who are paid for each call they attend, thereby reducing pay, there are opportunities to reinvest this in other work that they do. • Reduced false alarm incident may also improve retention and recruitment issues due to reduction in disruption to their primary employment and a better work/life balance.

- | | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We are actively working with representatives of firefighters on our On-Call duty system, and with our wider employee group, to manage any such risks. |
|--|---|

Rob MacDougall
Chief Fire Officer and Director for Community Safety

Contact Officer: Area Manager Jason Crapper, Fire and Rescue Service,
jason.crapper@oxfordshire.gov.uk, Tel. 07766498055

June 2024

Annex 1 – AFA Attendance Policy - Delegated Decision Report (Jan 2024)



Automatic%20Fire%20Alarms%20Delegate

Annex 2 - Engagement – Fire Alarm Consultation Report



Engagement%20-%20fire%20alarm%20co

Annex 3 – Consultation Written Response from FBU



Fire Brigades Union
submission - AFA atte

Annex 4 - Written Response Back to the FBU Following Their Consultation Feedback



KOxfordshire
Response to FBU AFA

Annex 1 – AFA Attendance Policy – Delegated Decision Report (Jan 2024)

Divisions Affected – All divisions

CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH INEQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

09 January 2024

Automatic Fire Alarm Attendance Policy Report by Jason Crapper

RECOMMENDATION

25. **The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to**

Authorise the Chief Fire Officer to proceed with a public consultation for changes to the Fire and Rescue Service's automatic fire alarm attendance policy.

Executive Summary

26. This paper outlines the national and local issues with respect to the high incidence of false alarms from automatic fire alarms systems and proposes a public consultation regarding changes to the Fire and Rescue Service's policy for attending automatic fire alarm incidents. The paper highlights that several efficiency and effectiveness benefits could be delivered for OCC through reduced incidents being attended by the Fire and Rescue Service, financial efficiencies, reduced associated vehicle mileage, reduced vehicle emissions, higher productivity for Fire and Rescue Service employees and a reduction in unnecessary blue light mobilisations that pose a risk to the public.

Background

27. The Fire and Rescue Service published its Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) for 2022-26 which sets out how the service will continue to manage and reduce the fire related risks to Oxfordshire, as well as contributing to our broader community safety work within Public Health. There are several challenges that the service continues to face including financial pressures, availability of our On-Call firefighters, meeting our response standards, and providing an agile service that addresses current and emerging risks such as climate adaptation, increased population, social deprivation, and changes to County infrastructure.

Community Safety Services, which includes the Fire and Rescue Service, is currently undertaking a fundamental internal review, encompassing all departments and service-areas, to identify changes to services which provide opportunities for improvement in efficiency and effectiveness and economy. This wider programme of review is inherently linked to supporting the principle of constant learning and improvement within Community Safety Services and supports the fiscal health of the wider council.

One area that presents itself as an opportunity as far as the Community Safety Service's review is concerned is the high rate of false alarms that has been a theme of fire and rescue service inspection since His Majesty's Inspector of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) began the modern era of fire and rescue inspection in 2018. In the very first 'State of Fire' report in 2019, HMICFRS identified that *"False alarms continue to be the biggest demand services face. In 2018/19, across England 40.1 percent (231,067) of all incidents attended by [fire and rescue services] FRSs were fire false alarms"*. HMICFRS also identified that *"nearly two-thirds (65 percent, 150,967) [of these fire false alarms] were due to apparatus such as a smoke alarm or sprinkler being triggered"*. This report will focus on this subset of false alarms from automatic fire alarm systems.

Within Thames Valley, the subject of false alarms has been the subject of 'areas for improvement' following each of the two inspections that each of the three Thames Valley fire and rescue services received in 2018/19 and 2021/22 respectively. In the year to 31 March 2021, the percentage of all incidents attended by each of the three Thames Valley fire and rescue services that were false alarms was 50% (Oxfordshire), 39% (Buckinghamshire) and 48% (Royal Berkshire). False alarms ultimately represent an inefficient use of fire and rescue resources.

This report focuses on the intention for Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS) to implement a revised automatic fire alarm attendance policy and procedure with a view to adoption across Thames Valley. This policy and procedure will be based on a review of mobilisation policies that have been implemented in other fire and rescue services around the UK.

Key Issues

Oxfordshire False Alarm Performance

28. OFRS has twice been told by HMICFRS that we need to effectively address the burden of false alarms. Our most recent attempts at improvement since September 2021 have been to weight our interventions more heavily towards persistent problem premises including the allocation of single points of contact for those premises to ensure we develop meaningful relationships. Despite this, we have been unable to meaningfully reduce our attendance at false alarms. Analysis of our last five years of incident data indicates:

- That we attend on average around 1500 false alarms from automatic fire alarms per year.
- Of these, around 1% are caused by a fire with the remaining 99% being false

alarms¹.

Proposals for changes to automatic fire alarm attendance policy

29. A review of automatic fire alarm policies from other fire and rescue services in the UK highlight that a number² have introduced policies that involve call challenge (effectively asking premises to confirm whether the premises has been checked and whether a fire has been found) and call filtering to identify which incidents will and will not be attended based on the type of building involved. Following this review of automatic fire alarm attendance policies from several other fire and rescue services, it is proposed that OFRS pursue a policy of call challenge and call filtering via Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) and that this is subject to a full public consultation as part of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service's Community Risk Management Planning process.

The approach that will be consulted on will involve maintaining a reduced emergency response attendance (generally one fire engine as per the current policy) to the highest risk buildings. For lower risk buildings, the intention is to consult on a policy of not sending a fire engine to reports of automatic fire alarm actuation in these premises unless the call is backed up with a positive indication that there is a fire or that there are possible signs of a fire. The public consultation will propose additional detail and a rationale for how buildings are categorised.

Benefits

30. The benefits that would be realised by implementing a revised automatic fire alarm policy will clearly be dependent on what is implemented following the outcomes of the public consultation. The general benefits for the communities of Oxfordshire are as follows:
- Reduction in false alarms being attended by the Fire and Rescue Service.
 - Reduced pay costs associated with a reduction in the mobilising of crews conditioned to the On-Call and day crewing duty systems.
 - Reduced disruption for On-Call primary employment which could improve the retention of On-Call firefighters over the longer term.
 - Increased fire appliance availability to respond to genuine emergency incidents.
 - Increased productivity of Wholetime firefighter crews.
 - Reduced vehicle costs associated with the attending false alarms.
 - Reduced road risk associated with attending automatic fire alarm activations.
 - Reduced vehicle emissions.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

¹ Data taken from the national Incident Recording System.

² Services that have implemented policies of call challenge and incident filtering include Kent, West Sussex, Surrey, Lincolnshire, Manchester and Scotland Fire and Rescue Services.

31. The proposed changes to the Fire and Rescue Service's automatic fire alarm attendance policy will ultimately allow the fire and rescue service to prioritise its limited resources on more productive tasks, including community safety work, which will enable the service to prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents (priority 9). An additional and indirect benefit will be in the reduction of incidents being attended by the service which will contribute in small way to help the council address the climate emergency (priority 1).

Financial Implications

32. There are currently no significant costs identified for implementing a revised automatic fire alarm policy that is in line with this report. It is possible that some small costs might be associated with the technical implementation of revised policy within the Thames Valley Fire Control Service. Any such costs will be scoped as the project proceeds but are not expected to be significant and would be funded within the existing service budget.

Comments checked by:

Thomas James, Finance Business Partner, thomas.james@oxfordshire.gov.uk
(Finance)

Legal Implications

33. There is no strict duty for fire and rescue services to attend automatic fire alarm activations. Any policy that is based on non-attendance would have to be compatible with the statutory duty to make provision (sufficient personnel, services, equipment, effective arrangements for receiving and responding to calls for help and for obtaining information which the Fire and Rescue Service needs to carry out its functions) for the purposes of:

- (a) Extinguishing fires in its area, and
- (b) Protecting life and property in the event of fires in its areas

34. Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the responsible person has a duty to take general fire precautions. The responsible person includes the owner, employer, landlord, occupier or anyone in a control of the premises. This places the onus on the responsible person to undertake a fire risk assessment and consider if an automatic fire alarm system is required at the premises, ensure it is tested and maintained and take steps to manage false alarms.

Comments checked by:

Paul Grant, Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer,
paul.grant@oxfordshire.gov.uk (Legal)

Staff Implications

35. The staff resources for engaging with stakeholders as part of the public consultation and for implementing any new automatic fire alarm attendance policy and supporting procedures would be drawn from the Fire Protection department within the Fire and Rescue Service and with support from our partner organisation, Thames Valley Fire Control Service.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

36. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been drafted and will remain a live document throughout the internal and public consultation and decision making process. At this stage, the EIA indicates that any policy that is aligned with this report would not have any direct or indirect impact on protected groups.

Sustainability Implications

37. A Climate impact Assessment has been drafted and will remain a live document throughout the internal and public consultation and decision making process. This assessment has indicated that any policy changes stemming from this work are only likely to result in a reduction in the incidents attended by the Fire and Rescue Service which will lead to less mileage being undertaken by fire engines and therefore less vehicle emissions. A net positive environmental benefit is therefore anticipated.

Risk Management

38. There are five areas of possible risk that are introduced by implementing a revised policy and procedure aligned with this paper as follows:
- i) The risk of a fire, fire-related fatality/injury or serious damage occurring in a premises due to a delayed fire and rescue attendance stemming from a revised fire alarm attendance policy. In the last five years, only around 1% of automatic fire alarm incidents have been caused by fires and these incidents have tended to not require much if any action on the part of the Fire and Rescue Service. However, whilst a very low risk, there is always a chance that a serious incident will occur in a building to which the service was alerted by an automatic fire alarm but did not respond.
 - ii) Damage to the service's reputation by pursuing a change to automatic fire alarm policy that wider stakeholders disagree with. It is felt that by pursuing arrangements that align with those that already exist within the wider fire and rescue sector, coupled with a structured public consultation exercise, the service can manage this risk to a low enough level that would allow it to proceed.
 - iii) Reduced incidents for crews on On-Call terms and conditions resulting in less pay for this group of employees. This loss of incidents and pay could result in reduced morale amongst these employees and exasperate current recruitment and retention issues. There is a possibility that some affected employees may welcome the reduction in disruption posed by attending false alarms.

- iv) Increased average response times across the service due to a reduction in automatic fire alarm incidents in our more urban areas which has the consequence of our response performance being more influenced by our slightly slower response performance in our more rural areas. As this piece of work is part of a much wider review within Community Safety Services, the intention will be for this risk to be offset by changes and improvements to the operational response model within the Fire and Rescue Service.

- v) Increased risk to firefighter safety if faced with a more developed fire due to a delayed attendance. This is a very low risk for several reasons. Firstly, our ongoing firefighter training ensures that our highly trained crews can safely, competently, and effectively deal with serious fires and we will monitor and review incidents to ensure any lessons are learned. Also, our proposals ensure that the buildings that pose the highest risk to our firefighters are highlighted as requiring an attendance in the event of a fire alarm actuation anyway. Additionally, the increased road risk associated with responding to automatic fire alarms could arguably exceed any risk to firefighters from more developed fires given the training our crews receive.

Rob MacDougall
Chief Fire Officer

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December 2024

Annex 2 – Engagement – Fire Alarm Consultation Report



Proposed changes to the way we respond to automatic fire alarms – consultation report March 2024

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1 Executive summary

- 1.1 This report sets out an analysis of the responses and feedback provided via the public consultation that Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service conducted between 4 March 2024 and 13 May 2024. The public consultation invited views regarding proposals for the service to reduce false alarms by changing the way in which it responds to reports of fire alarm activations. In total, we received 134 responses to the consultation, of which 131 responded directly via the online survey hosted on Let's Talk Oxfordshire.
- 1.2 The analysis indicates that there was general agreement with the proposals amongst survey respondents with support for the need for change, the approach to categorising building risk and the proposals for how we attend high and low-risk buildings. The respondents clearly outlined that, should any of the proposals be taken forward, there is a strong need and desire for there to be a high-profile campaign and strong stakeholder engagement to ensure that organisations are aware and ready for the changes.
- 1.3 Nevertheless, a number of survey respondents, along with the Fire Brigades Union, did not agree with the proposals and a number of notable comments were made, some of which have received a service response within this report.
- 1.4 The feedback from this consultation will be considered by the service to help inform its future intentions.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 This report analyses and summarises the public consultation that primarily explored views regarding new arrangements for the Fire and Rescue Service to reduce the attendance at false fire alarms caused by automatic fire alarms systems. This public consultation took place between 4 March 2024 and 13 May 2024 with the primary target audience being business, non-profit and local/central government organisations.
- 2.2 Attending false alarms costs the council money and diverts our fire engines away from more valuable work such preventing fires, community safety activities for the most vulnerable, and taking part in critical training. It also impacts our part-time firefighters and their employers when they are released from their normal employment to attend incidents.

- 2.3 Our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) for 2022-2026 identified that we would be working with our fire and rescue partners across Thames Valley to reduce the number of false alarms that we attend. The policy proposals were therefore developed with Royal Berkshire and Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Services as part of the principles of our Thames Valley collaborative workstreams and based on us not attending automatic fire alarms in some types of buildings until we have spoken to someone using a call challenge process.

3 Methodology

- 3.1 The public consultation focused on an online survey that was hosted on Let's Talk Oxfordshire between 4 March 2024 and 13 May 2024. Participants were provided with an information document that described why change is needed, our current procedures and the proposal options, and the risks and benefits associated with the proposals. A frequently asked questions section was provided to answer the likely commonly asked questions.
- 3.2 A key ambition of the public consultation was to target our own employees as well as business, non-profit and local/central government organisations as these were key stakeholders being affected by our proposals. Furthermore, we wanted to maximise the reach of the public consultation to ensure a high number of respondents.
- 3.3 The main approach taken to fulfil this brief was to email a contact list of Oxfordshire businesses that totalled approximately 16k contacts. Additionally, LinkedIn was used as the primary social media channel to raise the profile of the consultation although Twitter was also used as a secondary means, accepting that it did not allow us to focus as easily on the key stakeholder organisations mentioned. We also wrote to key partner organisations such as bordering fire and rescue services, Oxfordshire local authority Chief Executives and Thames Valley Police. Specific communications were also sent to fire alarm receiving centre companies.
- 3.4 Internally within the county council and fire and rescue service, the weekly councillor briefing was used four times to raise the profile of the consultation. We also engaged with the On-Call Duty System employee forum within the Fire and Rescue Service, the Fire Brigades Union and sent out several emails internally and requested posters to be displayed on stations to engage our employees.

4 Response rate and demographics

- 4.1 In total, we received 134 responses to the consultation, of which 131 responded directly via the online survey. The make-up of these respondents was as follows:

a business representative	34
an Oxfordshire resident	24
a representative of a group or organisation	16
an employee of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service	16
an Oxfordshire resident, a business representative	14
an Oxfordshire resident, an employee of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service	7

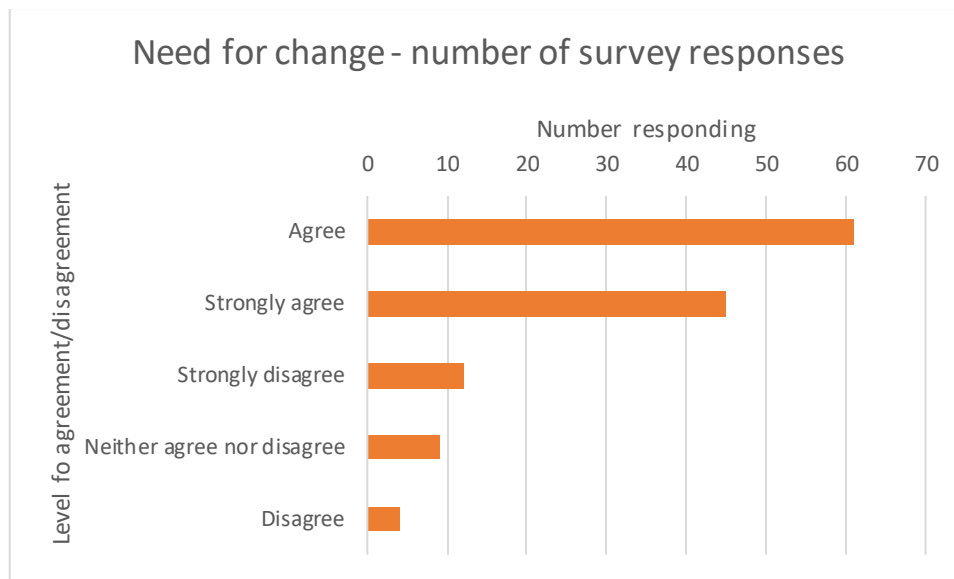
Other	6
Neighbouring fire and rescue service	3
an Oxfordshire resident, a representative of a group or organisation	3
a member of the public living outside of Oxfordshire	3
a parish, town, district, or county Councillor	2
an employee of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, an employer of a part time firefighter(s) on the On-Call duty system	1
an Oxfordshire resident, a representative of a group or organisation, a parish, town, district, or county Councillor	1
an Oxfordshire resident, an employer of a part time firefighter(s) on the On-Call duty system	1
an employer of a part time firefighter(s) on the On-Call duty system	1
an Oxfordshire resident, a business representative, a representative of a group or organisation	1
Fire Brigades Union	1

- 4.2 Of the notable respondents that identified themselves as 'other', three were from Thames Valley Fire Control Service and one was from a fire alarm receiving centre company. We also received three responses to the consultation from three neighbouring fire and rescue services, of which two were written emailed responses. We also received a written response from the Fire Brigades Union.
- 4.3 For those respondents that identified themselves as being employees of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, seven identified that they were non-operational, 12 identified that they were on a Wholetime duty system and five identified that they were on the On-Call duty system.

5 Findings

i) Need for change

- 5.1 Respondents to the survey were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed that there was a need for change to way that Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service respond to automatic fire alarms activations given the consultation proposals. The majority of respondents to the survey (106) either agreed or strongly agreed that there was a need for change.



5.2 Those respondents that agreed or strongly agreed with the need for change were representative of the various groups that responded to the survey, as illustrated by the table below.

a business representative	30
an Oxfordshire resident	19
an employee of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service	13
an Oxfordshire resident, a business representative	11
a representative of a group or organisation	11
Other	7
an Oxfordshire resident, an employee of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service	5
an Oxfordshire resident, a representative of a group or organisation	3
a parish, town, district, or county Councillor	2
a member of the public living outside of Oxfordshire	2
an Oxfordshire resident, a representative of a group or organisation, a parish, town, district, or county Councillor	1
an employee of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, an employer of a part time firefighter(s) on the On-Call duty system	1
an Oxfordshire resident, a business representative, a representative of a group or organisation	1

5.3 Of those that agreed or strongly agreed that there was a need for change, some mentioned that false alarms waste valuable resources and time, while others mentioned their personal experiences with false alarms. Some respondents also mentioned the need for better engagement between business owners and fire alarm installation companies to reduce the incidence of false alarms. One respondent stated that *“automated systems are great for alarming workers and inhabitants of a building but should not in most cases need the automatic calling out of an emergency service”*.

5.4 16 respondents to the survey, who identified as being from various responding groups, disagreed or strongly disagreed that change was required (see breakdown below):

an Oxfordshire resident	4
an Oxfordshire resident, a business representative	3
an Oxfordshire resident, an employee of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service	2
a business representative	2
a representative of a group or organisation	2
an employee of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service	1
a member of the public living outside of Oxfordshire	1
an Oxfordshire resident, an employer of a part time firefighter(s) on the On-Call duty system	1

5.5 Of these that disagreed or strongly disagreed that there was a need for change, some mentioned concerns about the risk of not attending a fire alarm, whilst others mentioned the need for better fire alarm systems and engagement between businesses and fire alarm installation companies. Some respondents also mentioned the impact on recruitment and retention of On-Call firefighters. One respondent stated that *“it’s hard enough to get [On-Call] recruits in the door to keep them when they don’t turn out for a month will be even harder”*.

5.6 9 respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the need for change. Some mentioned that they could see both sides of the proposal, whilst others mentioned the need to consider all aspects of the fire service, including financial constraints. Some of these respondents also mentioned concerns about the impact on recruitment and retention of On-Call firefighters.

ii) Categorisation of building risk

5.7 Respondents to the survey were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed with the building risk categorisation that was offered in the proposal. The majority of respondents (101) to the survey agreed or strongly agreed with (see breakdown below).

Agree	70
Strongly agree	31
Disagree	14
Neither agree nor disagree	10
Strongly disagree	6

5.8 One respondent stated that they *“agree with the rationale for categorising the risk, it acknowledges the things that matter - when and where people are at their most vulnerable and which premises represent high value and/or significance”*. Another felt that *“It seems logical enough. Maybe there could be exceptions made for*

example, a medium risk could be upgraded to high risk based on specific information (such as a history of arson maybe)”.

- 5.9 20 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the building risk categorisation and highlighted their concerns. For example, one respondent suggested that buildings with large amounts of flammable material should be considered higher risk, while another suggested that schools should be classified as high risk. Another respondent felt that *“Entertainment and major sporting stadia have vulnerable groups, immense numbers of people and in my experience can have sketchy fire safety management”*. One respondent questioned the underlying approach to the risk classification of medium risk buildings, suggesting that the approach put forward in the consultation was *“too arbitrary”* and that *“greater work is needed to assess building value outside of infrastructure and life risk”*.
- 5.10 One employee of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service stated that *“if we don't respond to alarms, we then wait for it to be a confirmed fire that is a business gone which could put people out of work and destroy livelihoods”*. An Oxfordshire business representative stated that they *“disagree because our business appears to be automatically classified as 'low risk' despite often having 100s or 1000s of people in it at a time. We would want as a minimum to be contacted to check if attendance is required, and if no answer to assume we have an incident requiring attendance”*.

iii) Proposals for responding to fire alarms in high-risk buildings

- 5.11 Respondents to the survey were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed with our proposals to attend fire alarm activations in high-risk buildings 24-hours a day. The majority of respondents (122) agreed or strongly agreed with these proposals (see breakdown below).

Agree	66
Strongly agree	56
Disagree	4
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Strongly disagree	2

- 5.21 One employee of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service stated that they would *“agree with continuing however during the day I think we should call challenge all buildings that would be occupied. Most of the above buildings would have staff and would call 999 following their investigation if they felt it was necessary”*. A business representative felt that the approach to high risk buildings *“Applies the precautionary principle to the highest risk”*.
- 5.22 Of the 6 respondents that disagreed or strongly disagreed with our proposals to attend fire alarm activations in high-risk buildings 24-hours, one actually agreed with the overall approach to but felt that *“some of these high risk properties, such as private homes, school boarding and high profile buildings such as university accommodation always have people around that have mobile phones, a non attendance at these would reduce your attendance at false alarms even more”*. A representative of Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service stated that they would

not call challenge fire alarms received from high risk buildings and that they would make an immediate response.

iv) Preferences for medium-risk buildings

5.23 Respondents to the survey were asked to indicate what their preferred approach would be for our approach to attending fire alarms in medium-risk buildings and to also provide a reason for their answer.

Option B: Not attend medium-risk buildings between 9am and 6pm only unless there is a fire or there are signs of fire.	68
Option A: Continue to attend automatic fire alarm activations in medium-risk buildings.	40
Option C: Not attend automatic fire alarm systems in medium-risk buildings 24 hours a day unless there is a fire or there are signs of fire.	23

5.24 For some of those respondents whose preference was Option B (Not attend medium-risk buildings between 9am and 6pm only, 67), they felt that during working hours, businesses are responsible for investigating their own fire alarm activations. Others felt that Option B is a reasonable compromise with a healthy percentage of false alarm reduction. Some respondents suggested that this approach should be applied initially, and then after time, conduct a review to analyse the findings and then make a decision on whether to move to not attending fire alarms in medium-risk buildings 24-hours a day.

5.25 For those respondents whose preference was Option A (Continue to attend automatic fire alarm activations in medium-risk buildings, 25), one respondent felt that this was necessary *“for the sake of the schools”*, whilst another respondent felt that medium-risk buildings still presented a significant level of risk.

5.26 For those respondents whose preference was Option C (Not attend automatic fire alarm systems in medium-risk buildings 24 hours a day, 23) one respondent felt that whilst they agreed with this option, they felt that schools should still receive an attendance outside of school hours. An employee of Thames Valley Fire Control Service, which provides the emergency call handling for the three Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services, gave a practical response by stating that Option C is *“simple, straight forward, effective and easy to follow”*.

v) Proposals for dealing with low-risk buildings

5.27 Respondents to the survey were asked to indicate what extent they agreed with our proposals to not attend fire alarm activations in low-risk buildings 24-hours a day unless there is a fire or signs of fire. The majority (88) agreed or strongly with the proposals (see breakdown of responses is provided in the table below).

Agree	58
Strongly agree	30

Neither agree nor disagree	19
Disagree	13
Strongly disagree	11

- 5.28 For those respondents that agreed or strongly agreed with the proposals regarding low-risk buildings, some felt that low-risk sites such as those outlined have alarm systems and monitoring arrangements including areas such as security. Also, that people on site that may be better placed to check alarm activations compared to some high-risk buildings. Others felt that this is a reasonable area in which to save resources in case of need to respond to an alarm in a higher category. Some respondents suggested that this is a sensible risk-based decision.
- 5.29 For those respondents that disagreed or strongly disagreed (24) with the proposals regarding low-risk buildings, some disagreed because they believe that all activations need to be attended and the fire and rescue service should have the staff required to do so. Others felt that some of the perceived low-risk buildings are really important to both the local economy and community and a significant fire at these venues could affect both significantly. Some respondents suggested that repeat offenders should incur charges, not increased risk.
- 5.30 For those respondents that neither agreed nor disagreed (19) with the proposals regarding low-risk buildings, some were unsure about the proposal because they felt that low-risk buildings still carry a level of risk that needs to be considered. Others were wary of the proposal because they were concerned that low-risk buildings could be allowed to burn down if no one could confirm if there was a fire. Some respondents suggested that the call challenge protocol should be worded and operated carefully.

vi) Overall option preferences

- 5.31 Respondents were asked to indicate which of the proposal options was their preferred option to take forward. The breakdown of responses is provided in the table below in brackets. It should be noted that due to the absence of a 'do nothing' option in survey, those 16 respondents that either 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' with the need for change generally expressed a desire for an attendance by the fire and rescue service to still be made. Their responses have been removed from the figures in brackets to provide a more truthful account of the responses. Respondents were also asked to outline why they felt their chosen option was their preferred approach.

Option B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to attend automatic fire alarm activations in higher-risk buildings. • Not attend low-risk buildings 24 hours a day unless there is a fire or there are signs of fire. • Not attend medium-risk buildings between 9am and 6pm only unless there is a fire or there are signs of fire. • Attend automatic fire alarm incidents in medium-risk buildings outside of these times unless the building is occupied and there are no signs of fire. 	(69) 65
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Option A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to attend automatic fire alarm activations in higher-risk and medium-risk buildings. • Not attend low-risk buildings 24 hours a day unless there is a fire or there are signs of fire. 	(36) 21
Option C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to attend automatic fire alarm activations in higher-risk buildings. • Not attend automatic fire alarm systems for both low and medium-risk buildings 24 hours a day unless there is a fire or there are signs of fire. 	(26) 26

5.32 Of those that preferred Option B (65), many respondents felt that it was a good compromise and a reasonable option. Some respondents felt that it was a good place to start and that it offered a good balance between reducing false alarms and maintaining a strong level of responsibility for medium-risk environments. Others felt that it was a less drastic step as a first attempt to reduce the spend and time on attending false alarms. Some respondents also suggested that after seeing the results of Option B, the service could move to Option C.

5.33 Of those that preferred Option A (21), many thought that although it was the best option, they expressed concerns about the challenge of convincing the public and businesses that any reduction in response would still deliver a high level of safety. Some respondents felt that Option A was the least risky option and that it could be reviewed in the future to see if a move to Option B or C would be appropriate. Others felt that Option A was the best of three but that the current approach taken by Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service should be maintained and that none of the options were appropriate.

5.34 Of those that preferred Option C (26), many felt that it was their preferred option because it gave the biggest reduction in false alarms as supported by the data. Some respondents felt that this option would be the simplest to follow without confusion and that it would free up more time for the firefighters to train and carry out prevention activities. Others felt that this proposal increased the likelihood of the correct resource being available at the right time.

vii) Suggestions for supporting stakeholders to prepare for any future changes

5.35 Respondents were also asked to offer any suggestions that they might have regarding any ways that the service could prepare for any changes should any of the proposals be introduced. 66 respondents either did not have suggestions or stated that this was the case. The remaining 65 respondents provided various suggestions. One respondent suggested that we need to have *"Consultation with larger companies so that clear instruction can be given to staff"*. Another suggested that *"the general public will need reassurance that they can continue to rely on the fire service to attend whenever they need it. If the messaging is wrong then they will lose confidence and not be convinced"*. One business representative suggested that we could *"set up a dedicated email box that is monitored and responded to promptly, also an attended phone line people can ring if they have queries"*. The

general theme was in the need to engage further and raise the profile of impending changes through multiple channels to ensure that stakeholders are prepared.

viii) Further comments

- 5.36 Respondents were also asked to offer any further comments they had about the proposals. The majority of respondents (86) either did not have further comments to make or stated that this was the case. Of the 45 respondents who offered further comments, some felt that the proposals were a positive step forward, while others expressed concerns about the impact on On-Call crews and the need for businesses to take more responsibility for preventing false alarms.
- 5.37 The two fire and rescue services that emailed us separately agreed with the proposals without providing specific responses to the questions posed in the survey.
- 5.38 The Fire Brigades Union's written response also did not provide responses to the questions posed in the survey. However, their response was not in favour of the proposals, citing a risk to firefighters, fire control staff and local communities. They also indicated that rather than not attending fire alarm activations, fire and rescue services should *"demand more resources and extra capacity to deal with [Automatic Fire Alarms] AFAs safely and properly"*. The Fire Brigades Union also voiced concern that the public were consulted at the same time as themselves rather than pre-public-consultation arrangements being put in place for themselves.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 General agreement with the proposals was amongst the survey responses with support for the need for change, the approach to categorising building risk and the proposals for how we attend high and low-risk buildings.
- 6.2 There was support for all options although this was not evenly distributed across the options.
- 6.3 The respondents clearly outlined that, should any of the proposals be taken forward, there is a strong need and desire for there to be a high-profile campaign and strong stakeholder support to ensure that organisations are aware and ready for the changes.
- 6.4 The feedback from this consultation will be considered by the service to help inform its future intentions.

Southern Region Fire Brigades Union submission

Thames Valley Brigades: Consultation on Options for Responding to Automatic Fire Alarms



03 April 2024

Introduction

This is the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) submission to the Thames Valley (Buckinghamshire, Berkshire & Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Services) consultation on Options for Responding to Automatic Fire Alarms. The FBU is the democratic, professional voice of firefighters and other workers within fire and rescue services across the UK. The union represents the vast majority of wholetime (full-time), retained (part-time, on-call) and volunteer operational firefighters and operational fire control staff across the UK.

As a collective response to the three fire and rescue services within the region, this document reflects a thorough review conducted through the structures of each brigade committee and collectively the Southern Region of the Fire Brigades Union. We have coordinated our response, aligning with the consultation processes and associated documents from each service. The committees acknowledge that this initiative stems from directives by HMICFRS and NFCC and has been adopted by various fire services across the UK. In evaluating the proposed changes, we have analysed the number of Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs) attended in each service and engaged with station representatives to gauge their views and insights.

Consultation with FBU representatives

The FBU, the representative staff body of firefighters and those within the three Thames Valley fire and rescue services in our view have not been adequately consulted and normal channels for consultation have been bypassed. Not allowing for meaningful dialogue prior to public consultation is an indication that the views of staff have not been fully considered at this point in time. As this is a proposal that covers the three fire and rescue services a discussion involving the FBU in each brigade we believe would have assisted in providing productive feedback and the ability to explain our position to our members and the service.

Significant proposals such as those detailed should in our view be based on a review conducted over a period of time. Yet the consultation signposts to a public "survey" that will be carried out in two of the three services and allowing staff engagement at the same time - those that understand in detail what these proposals mean and how they will impact / change the response being provided to the public.

Moreover, we expect the review process detailed in each service to fully involve the Fire Brigades Union, to review openly the feedback from different organisations such as schools, universities, NHS establishments and others listed in the three categories of risk detailed in the proposals. It would be informative to learn how many organisations feed back into this process and what lengths each service has taken to consult and reach out to key stake holders in their respective counties.

Risks to wholetime and retained firefighters

The FBU locally do not feel we have been consulted on this proposal nor had the opportunity to feed in our concerns through the recognised processes and we feel these proposals represent a

significant risk to firefighter safety and to the communities we serve. We will outline some of those concerns in this response.

The consultation notes that only a small per cent of automatic fire alarms (AFA) actuations that are received are actual confirmed fires, and many of these requiring no action – what this does mean is a number of incidents did require action and intervention by fire crews, clearly the risk remains but now it is being proposed that the three services should not address and manage this risk fully but should ignore it – firefighters and the public would be concerned if this were to be the case.

The FBU also has issues with the back to front argument being made in the consultation. On the one hand, the consultation complains that despite attending AFAs the service has no legal duty to attend. On the other hand, it sees the solution, as not providing statutory footing and resources to aid these efforts but to place more responsibility on duty holders, whose judgements on AFAs is clearly an area of concern. Additionally, the argument we have seen before that the majority of other UK fire and rescue services now require a confirmed fire before they send fire appliances is a part of a race to the bottom and we propose that each of the three fire and rescue services demand more resources and extra capacity to deal with AFAs safely and properly.

Attendance at AFAs are never unwanted nor would we imagine unwelcome to the vast majority of occupiers. The reassurance of knowing a professional response is on its way to assist, advise and if necessary commence an early attack on a fire, cannot be overstated. Seconds save lives and a reduction in responses only increases the chances of fires going undetected until it is too late, or a delayed call for assistance when an incorrect assessment is made by a member of the public as opposed to the judgement of a professionally trained, qualified and experienced Firefighter.

AFAs are a sizable portion of a firefighter's work and aid familiarisation of premises in the station's grounds; they can conduct fire safety checks and disseminate fire safety advice to the duty holder. This is valuable work that serves our communities and protects the public.

Firefighters have raised over many years, concerns around reductions in crewing levels, appliance availability, non positive crewing of specialist vehicles such as ALPs in some brigades and changes to responses and PDAs. What is needed is an urgent injection of funding into the fire and rescue service that will bring numbers back to at least 2010 levels. We've lost a fifth of our workforce nationally – in no sector could you do that without it having some impact.

The fire and rescue service needs more resources and pursuing these proposals, kicks the can for more resources down the road and puts our members and the public at risk.

The prevalence of false alarms from automatic fire alarm is acknowledged; however, it's imperative to recognise the potential risks associated with low-risk premises listed in the consultation. Factors such as complex layouts, those that are scientific in nature, and high-value contents can significantly elevate the risk in such settings. The time delay in attending to alarms could result in more developed fires, posing hazards to both firefighters and the public. The financial implications of a more developed fire are substantial and can lead to severe consequences for businesses, potentially resulting in total loss. It's crucial to emphasise that expecting untrained individuals to confirm a fire before involving the fire service contradicts established safety protocols and sound advice provided by the fire service themselves, "to get out, call the fire service out and stay out". This delay increases the risk of greater damage and endangers both property and lives.

Risks to control staff

The FBU has issues with the impact of the proposals on firefighters in control. These include moral pressures, increased workload from increased call challenging, and the potential for increased stress and lower morale. Given that the FBU has not had prior consultation - our control staff members have not been consulted widely on these proposals and lack the thorough and considered consultation they deserve.

The issue we consider regarding the 'call challenge' system in relation to AFAs. The main purpose of call challenging is to ascertain if there is a fire within the premises. This is currently the legal responsibility of the duty holder but custom has resulted in this investigation being undertaken by fire crews – without fire crews on the ground. Call times will likely increase due to call challenging, diminishing the ability of control firefighters to respond to other emergencies. The call challenge approach arguably puts undue pressure and responsibility on control members, relying on the public to spot signs of fire and building damage and therefore the three fire and rescue services are potentially abdicating responsibility.

We are planning to meet and discuss these proposals with our Control members to ascertain any concerns regarding the robustness of the system and current practice and potential impact these proposals will have. As staff utilise a flow chart to the letter, there are no assurances that alarm companies and switchboards can answer all questions being asked of them which at present they are often unable to do. Also, there are no assurances that every alarm company/stakeholder will be made aware of these proposals, made their staff aware and confirmed this to the service as potentially we could see control staff having to explain the process to alarm company staff. It is clear that these proposals lack the robustness and rigour to ensure our control members are best able to perform their role.

Conclusion

The FBU has not been properly consulted on this proposal nor had the opportunity to feed in our concerns through the recognised processes. They don't improve the management of risk or protect firefighters and public safety. It is worth noting that firefighters don't get turned out to UFAS; they only know that it's an unwanted/false alarm once they leave the incident, having established and confirmed that conditions in and around the premises are safe. These proposals will ultimately put public safety at risk for alleged efficiencies when what is required, is more resources and investment in Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire fire and rescue services.

The broader context of declining resources within the fire and rescue service nationally is a significant concern. With over 12,000 firefighters lost since 2010 and longer response times for attending incidents, there is a pressing need for investment in frontline firefighters and fire protection/prevention roles. The current practice of crews riding appliances with four members compromises firefighter safety, particularly in the absence of a dedicated Breathing Apparatus Entry Control Officer (BAECO). Given these proposals, the critical necessity of crewing fire appliances with five riders becomes apparent. Plus ensuring there is no downgrading of fire cover and the number of fire appliances available during the night as is being proposed in the region is also of grave concern based on the concerns we have raised in this response. Investment in the fire and rescue service is essential to ensure the safety of both firefighters and the public they serve. We ask for the three services to look again at these proposals and consult properly with the FBU to ensure firefighter and public safety are not negatively compromised.

Reference: RM/JC/CB

Nick Bourke and John Shuker
Fire Brigades Union

VIA EMAIL

**Oxfordshire County Council
Fire and Rescue Service
Headquarters
Sterling Road
Kidlington
Oxfordshire OX5 2DU**

**Rob MacDougall
Chief Fire Officer and Director
of Community Safety**

Date: 18th June 2024

Dear Nick and John,

Re: FBU submission - Consultation on Options for Responding to Automatic Fire Alarms

Thank you for responding to our public consultation on proposals to reduce the number of false alarms from automatic fire alarms systems. We appreciate and welcome your comments and will attempt to address them via this response using the headings that themed the feedback that you provided.

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service has long been a champion of reducing the impact of false alarms from automatic fire alarms systems, including both the negative impact on business and on the fire and rescue service itself. We began this journey as far back as 2004 with the implementation of fire control call challenging protocols and in the resourcing of business engagement with respect to false alarms. However, the learning we have gathered since, together with the experiences of other fire and rescue services, mean that we now believe that additional change is required to further reduce the incidence of false alarms.

Consultation with FBU representatives

In 2021, we consulted on our [Community Risk Management Plan for 2022-2026](#) within which we stated that we *“are working with the other fire and rescue services across the Thames Valley to look at new ways of reducing the amount of false alarms we attend”*.

Prior to the recent public consultation, we presented to the On-Call forum to help understand how our proposals specifically affected that key stakeholder group and we shared a detailed internal county paper with yourselves on 7 December 2023 which included possible proposals for the public consultation.

We also view the public consultation as a legitimate route for consulting all stakeholders whether they be external to the service or internal such, as the Fire Brigades Union as part of our normal trade union protocols. We also expect the consultation with yourselves to continue beyond the closure of the public consultation.

Risks to wholetime and retained firefighters

We are of the view that our proposals increase the relative safety of firefighters. Attending fire alarms activations represents a very real road safety risk to firefighters, as well as to other road users. Reducing our attendance to false alarms generated by automatic fire alarm systems will dramatically reduce this risk. Additionally, our proposals will afford additional opportunities for firefighters to perform other duties, including training and risk familiarisation which will help to maintain high levels of competence.

Our proposals have been designed specifically to manage down the risk to both firefighters and the public by ensuring that any factors that pose a heightened risk to either cause a building to be classified as a 'high risk' such that it continues to receive an emergency response to automatic fire alarm activations.

Risks to control staff

The service has carried out consultation with Thames Valley Fire Control employees during our project and we will continue involve them. The views of this critical employee group of have helped us to develop our thoughts and proposals and they will be important going forward in the design of work processes used to implement them.

The consultation has carefully considered the impact to Thames Valley Fire Control employees and a clear objective of the proposals and collaborative drive have been to align ways of working across the Thames Valley to reduce the complexity of their high-pressured work environment. We remain committed to providing any support that we can to Thames Valley Fire Control employees.

As ever, we remain to committed to working with the Fire Brigades Union for the benefit of the service, its employees and local communities and look forward to working with further in relation to these matters.

Yours sincerely



Rob MacDougall
Chief Fire Officer and Director of Community Safety

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DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH, INEQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

2 JULY 2024

SUPPLEMENTARY SUBSTANCE MISUSE SERVICE

Report by Corporate Director for Public Health and Community Safety

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet Member is **RECOMMENDED** to

- a) Approve the contract extension, via the appropriate legal route, for the Supplementary Substance Misuse Service, provided by Turning Point, for a period of 3 years.

Executive Summary

1. Supplementary Substance Misuse Services in Oxfordshire are provided by Turning Point under a contract for which the Council receives grant income from central government. The majority of this grant income is not yet confirmed to continue beyond the contract's expiry date, 31 March 2025, but it is widely expected to continue. A decision on enacting the extension option in the contract must be made before 30 September 2024, which is likely to be before central government confirm whether the grant funding will continue, change in value, or cease.
2. The options appraisal and business case recommend extending the contract, with mitigations to reduce financial risk to the Council if grant income from central government is not renewed, or if it is renewed at a lower value.
3. The annual contract value will be over £500,000, currently at £2,619,553 per annum.

Background

4. Over the past 4 years there has been a renewed national focus on the impact of drugs and alcohol, leading to the 10-year national strategy *'From Harm to Hope'*¹.
5. To help enhance substance misuse services in line with the strategy's ambitions, local authorities across England have been provided with a number of additional grants, from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Oxfordshire County Council has been provided with four grants:

¹ [From harm to hope: A 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/from-harm-to-hope)

Grant name	Started	Value for 2024/25
Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant ²	November 2020	£1,099,605
Supplementary Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery Grant ³	April 2022	£724,729
Supplementary Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery Housing Support Grant ⁴	November 2022	£567,708
Employment Individual Placement and Support Grant	April 2024	£227,511
Total Value		£2,619,553

6. To enable the continued delivery of supplementary services to meet the grant conditions and national OHID/DLUHC requirements, the Council commissioned a contract for these services, which are currently combined and delivered under a Supplementary Substance Misuse Service (SSMS). The service contract was awarded to Turning Point in 2022, and is delivered as an integrated service alongside the core Community Alcohol and Drug Service (which is also delivered by Turning Point).
7. The SSMS contract currently ends on 31 March 2025, aligned with the current end date of three of the four grants which fund the majority of the contract and its services. The contract has an option to extend up to 31 March 2028, to align with the end of the core Community Alcohol and Drug Service contract. The SSMS contract has a Termination Notice Period that allows the Council to terminate the service in whole or in part (thereby reduce services by terminating part of the contract) on 6 months' written notice.
8. The SSMS contract value is reviewed and adjusted to correspond with changes in the value of the OHID/DLUHC grants, which have increased since the contract started. The SSMS contract value for 2024/2025 is £2,619,553.
9. The Employment IPS grant is currently confirmed until 31 March 2026. The other three grants are currently only confirmed until 31 March 2025.
10. **Service Delivery**
The SSMS contract encompasses delivery of:
 - i. A Rough Sleeping Service: Since the project started in 2020, the service has worked with 804 rough sleepers coming through the Oxford Emergency Accommodation Pathway, engaging them into support to reduce harm and tackle their substance misuse.
 - ii. Additional staff delivering harm reduction and criminal justice interventions, as well as enhanced treatment capacity and additional medical and consumable products such as naloxone and Buprenorphine to more people across Oxfordshire.
 - iii. A partnership with Edge Housing to provide 3 additional properties (14 beds) to house people accessing substance misuse treatment, significantly increasing the number of beds available to people coming through substance misuse treatment services, to enable them to move into stable accommodation and maintain their treatment outcomes.

² [Extra help for rough sleepers with drug and alcohol dependency - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/extra-help-for-rough-sleepers-with-drug-and-alcohol-dependency)

³ [Extra funding for drug and alcohol treatment: 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/extra-funding-for-drug-and-alcohol-treatment-2022-to-2023)

⁴ [Drug strategy housing support funding: allocations 2022 to 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/drug-strategy-housing-support-funding-allocations-2022-to-2025)

- iv. Highly personalised and intensive employment support to help people with substance misuse problems build their recovery capital in work as they complete treatment.
11. The Oxfordshire service is performing exceptionally well and exceeding contractual targets across the core service and all supplementary services. The service has some of the highest outcomes in the country and is seen nationally as a model of good practice. The service has very good retention and high staff satisfaction. Maintaining stability of service provision remains vitally important throughout this period of funding uncertainty to ensure performance and quality of treatment and support for the people who access the service and the staff.

Key Issues

12. It is widely anticipated by stakeholders that funding for the three grants that are currently only confirmed until March 2025 will be extended at some level, but OHID and DLUHC are not currently able to confirm if any or all of these three grants will be extended, nor at what value this would be. Decisions on this will be made after the general election on 4 July 2024 but it is not possible to predict when these decisions will be made.
13. This paper recommends extending the current contract for 36 months at the 2024/2025 level of funding. This aligns with local and national strategic aims, and supports the Council's commitment to substance use treatment and recovery for residents. It allows for continued stability in this service during a temporary period of uncertainty about grant income and protects the Council's relationship with the provider by seeking to share risks regarding the current funding uncertainty and the possibility that this uncertainty may recur in future funding cycles. It also avoids risks and challenges associated with reducing services and then scaling them back up if renewed grant income is confirmed at a later date.

Under this recommended option the Council will reduce the financial risk resulting from uncertainty of continued external grant income by implementing a number of mitigation measures, including reducing the Termination Notice Period from 6 months to 3 months.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

14. **Strategic Priorities** - Provision of an alcohol and drug service is aligned with the Oxfordshire County Council Strategic Plan 2023-2025⁵ by tackling inequalities in Oxfordshire and prioritising the health and wellbeing of residents and the Oxfordshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024-2030⁶ by reducing the impact of ill-health through provision of alcohol advice and treatment. It also supports the BOB ICB

⁵ [Oxfordshire County Council - Our strategic plan 2023-2025](#)

⁶ [Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024-2030](#)

Strategic Priorities⁷ by supporting people to reduce their drinking and increasing the number of people receiving support to tackle their alcohol misuse.

15. Extending the SSMS contract enables delivery of enhanced substance misuse support to vulnerable populations, in line with the 10-year national alcohol and drug strategy '*From Harm to Hope*', and meets local strategic priorities overseen by the Oxfordshire Combating Drugs Partnership.

Financial Implications

16. The extension term recommended is 36 months. At the current funding level, the total annual value of the extension would be £2,619,553, and the total for the full 36-month extension period would be £7,858,659.
17. This would be expected to be funded in full from external grants if they are confirmed.
18. The Council will negotiate a reduced contract Termination Notice Period (to enable the Council to unilaterally terminate the contract without cause) for the SSMS contract from the current 6 months to 3 months.
19. The maximum financial risk, if the service was extended but the three grants that are not currently confirmed were to not be renewed, is then expected to be not more than £598,011.
20. To enable the contract to be extended, Public Health DLT have agreed to commit funding to bridge any potential gap that may arise from either delayed notification or reduced funding from the three OHID/DLUHC grants that fund the majority of this service. This will then cover the required Termination Notice Period and any service transition period beyond the required 3 months. The maximum period would be 3 to 6 months (£600,000 to £1.2 million).

This funding, if needed, will come from a combination of Public Health reserves and Public Health underspends in year.

Comments checked by:

Stephen Rowles, Strategic Finance Business Partner,
Stephen.rowles@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

21. The Council has the statutory power to undertake the substance misuse services delivered by this contract under section 12 Health and Social Care Act 2012.

⁷ [Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Partnership – Integrated Care Strategy, March 2023](#)

22. The unilateral options of the Council to extend the contract and terminate the contract on notice are rights embedded in the existing contract.
23. Any alteration of the contractual notice period as proposed under the preferred option will require agreement of the provider and constitute a modification of the contract. Under the Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023 the Council has a very strong justification that such modification would be lawful (see Procurement considerations below).
24. Agreeing a shorter Termination Notice Period of the contract during any extension period will reduce the period for which the Council is bound to continue paying for the services. Given the uncertainty over whether the Council's grant funding will be confirmed this will reduce the Council's contractual liability should it need to terminate the contract because it can no longer fund the service. The key consideration for the Council is therefore a commercial one around the costs of such liability (3 months of service funding) should the grant funding not be received.

Comments checked by: Jonathan Pool, Solicitor (contracts), Legal Services
(Jonathan.Pool@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Procurement Implications

25. The existing extension options available under the contract are for up to 3 years to 31 March 2028. The Council can take up its option to extend unilaterally, without modification to the contract.
26. The proposed reduction to the Termination Notice period to 3 months would amount to a contract modification. As the services delivered constitute health services, modifications are governed by The Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023 (PSR). Under PSR, the contract can be modified where the modification is attributable to a decision of the relevant authority; the modification does not render the contract materially different in character; and the cumulative change in the lifetime value is below £500,000 or 25%. The Council is only required to submit a modification notice if the modification exceeds £500,000.
27. Under the proposal, the contract will continue to deliver the same services to the same group of users and therefore is not materially different in character. The proposed modification does not have a financial impact on the contract. Therefore, the proposed modification does not have a procurement requirement and the Council is not required to issue a modification notice.

Comments checked by: Alex White, Category Manager – Public Health

Staff Implications

28. The Live Well Improve and Enable Substance Use Team within the Public Health and Community Safety Directorate will continue to performance manage the contract.

Equality & Inclusion and Climate Implications

29. Issues with substance use are not equally distributed within the population. Strong links exist between deprivation, adverse childhood experiences and substance use, with increased risk of poor outcomes borne by vulnerable populations such as people who are homeless, sex-workers and those in contact with the criminal justice system. This service addresses the wider determinants of health, identified in regular needs assessments, by targeting services and aiming to ensure equality of access. They provide non-judgmental and accessible psychosocial and clinical services across Oxfordshire, engaging vulnerable groups and those not currently accessing services through targeted assertive outreach and engagement activities to ensure improved outcomes for these populations.
30. An Equalities Impact Assessment for the service was completed in July 2023.
31. A Climate Impact Assessment for the service was completed in July 2023.

Risk Management

Risk	Mitigation
If we terminate part of the contract there will be no contractual mechanism for providing the services agreed under the three OHID/DLUHC grants should they continue, and therefore grant income allocations will not be able to be secured beyond March 2025. This will result in a disruption to service provision, bringing instability to the Provider, and reduced outcomes for people who use the services.	Extend the contract until OHID/DLUHC grant funding is known.
Significant financial risk to the Council if the three main grants are confirmed to not be continued beyond 31 March 2025 and no further funding is made available.	<p>Reduce contract notice period to 3 months to reduce financial risk.</p> <p>Identify cost savings within existing Public Health Substance Use budgets to contribute to any bridging funding required – for example, further reducing residential treatment placements.</p> <p>Work with OHID/DLUHC to identify risks and commence planning at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>Work with legal and procurement colleagues in advance of any grant notifications to ensure draft paperwork is ready should it look like grants will not be renewed.</p>
Medium financial risk to the Council if the three main grants are confirmed to be significantly	Reduce notice period to 3 months to reduce financial risk.

<p>reduced beyond 31 March 2025. If grants are reduced significantly, cuts to service delivery and staff would still be needed to be delivered in a quick timeframe.</p>	<p>Identify cost savings within existing Public Health Substance Use budgets to contribute to any bridging funding required – for example, further reducing residential treatment placements.</p> <p>Work with OHID/DLUHC to identify risks and commence planning at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>Work with service provider to identify initial plans for reductions in service delivery at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>Work with legal and procurement colleagues in advance of any grant notifications to ensure draft paperwork is ready should it look like grants will be significantly reduced.</p>
<p>Extending the contract and then giving notice on a significant portion of the value only a few months later may have a small reputational risk to the Council.</p>	<p>Open and transparent discussions with service provider and partners, on the risks for the service resulting from the delay in grant notification and likely reductions needed if funding is reduced</p>
<p>Budget fluctuations/demands in Public Health or the Council as a whole impact on service provision.</p>	<p>Existing contractual terms and conditions allowing for changes in finance.</p>

Key Dates / Next Steps

32. The current contract expires on 31 March 2025.
33. Should extension of the current contract be approved, the contract requires a 6-month Extension Notice Period, which would therefore be required by 30 September 2024.

Ansaf Azhar
Corporate Director Public Health and Community Safety

Background papers: Nil

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June 2024

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