

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

Statement of Assurance 2022-23

This important document outlines the way we meet our statutory duties.

You will find information on the following areas

- Introduction
- What is a Statement of Assurance?
- Governance
- Finance
- Annual Report 2022/23
- Community Risk Management Plan 2022/26
- Operational
- Emergency Response
- Prevention work
- Safeguarding
- Culture and Leadership
- Fire Protection activity
- Employee Relations and Resources
- Health and Safety
- Operational Learning, Training and Development
- National Fire Standards
- National Operational Guidance
- Emergency Planning
- Technology and Innovation
- Collaborative working
- Prevent
- Business and Corporate Services
- Gypsy and Traveller Services
- Trading Standards
- HMICFRS Inspection Report 2021/22
- Legislative and Constitutional frameworks – further information

**Please note hyperlink to Annual Report 2022/23 will be added following approval and pre-publication. The document pages are not numbered as it will be published as a seamless HTML page for easier reading.*

Introduction

Welcome to Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service's Statement of Assurance for 2022 to 2023. As the Cabinet Member and the Director of Community Safety and Chief Fire Officer, we are pleased to report on how we met the statutory duties of the Fire and Rescue Services Act, Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order, Civil Contingencies Act and the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

The year has seen Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS) deliver many successful initiatives by engaging with our diverse communities. For example, we saved Oxfordshire's most vulnerable communities thousands of pounds from scams by highlighting how fraudsters work. At the same time our firefighters faced an unprecedented number of fires from high summer temperatures related to climate change

Successful service delivery is linked to our staff and communities working together. Our drive to be one of the country's leading inclusive organisations continues unabated. Oxfordshire County Council invests heavily in the wellbeing of our staff and working culture where everyone is valued and can bring their whole selves to work.

Community Safety Services continues to deliver forward thinking services that aim to stop events from happening in the first place. We recognise that this can only be achieved by putting Oxfordshire's communities at the heart of what we do. Our staff are well motivated, equipped and trained to respond to the challenges we face in a rapidly changing world. We look forward to building on our successes and are firmly committed to continuing to improve wherever we can.

Councillor Dr Nathan Ley, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Inequalities and Community Safety

Rob MacDougall, Director of Community Safety and Chief Fire Officer

What is a Statement of Assurance?

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018 sets out a requirement for all fire and rescue authorities to provide annual assurance on financial, governance and operational matters through publishing an Annual Statement of Assurance. Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service's Annual Statement of Assurance confirms that we are demonstrating due regard to the requirements included in the framework and the expectations set out in the authority's risk management plans. The service also produces a separate Annual Report for 2022/23 detailing performance in important areas of service delivery.

You can read a copy of the Annual Report 2022/23 [*here](#)

Governance

Oxfordshire County Council is the designated Fire and Rescue Authority for the county of Oxfordshire. It has a primary responsibility to protect the community, reduce harm and save lives through prevention, protection and response. The Chief Fire Officer and the Cabinet Member for Community Services and Safety ensure the council meets its legal and operational responsibilities to provide an effective fire and rescue service for Oxfordshire's communities.

OFRS governance is carefully managed through regularly reviewed policies, procedures and assurance systems managed by monitoring officers and senior leadership officers. Effective systems of internal control are assured through a corporate governance framework. The Service adheres to the principles of the CIPFA / SOLACE framework "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government". Our Annual Governance statement demonstrates that we have fulfilled its obligations under this framework.

Further information can be found in Oxfordshire County Council's Annual Governance Statement which is included in our Statement of Accounts publication. A link to this information is included at the end of this document.

Finance

Our budget for 2022-2023

The total expenditure for Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service including corporate core costs was £28.6 million between 2022/23. This is equivalent to just 10.8p a day per person in Oxfordshire or £39.46 p/annum. As a Directorate of Oxfordshire County Council, the Service minimises its corporate running costs wherever possible through shared business support functions.

Community Safety Services works closely with other local authorities and agencies wherever possible to realise savings through collaborative purchasing arrangements.

Financial data is taken from the Local Authority Revenue, Expenditure and Financing 2022-23 Provisional Outturn return. Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service are an integral part of Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) who provide the *Statement of Accounts, audit reports and *Pay Policy statement. A summary of the Auditors' Report and findings can be found in the [Annual Audit letter](#).

Annual report 2022/23

As part of our reporting process, Community Safety Services also produces an Annual Report highlighting performance across key areas of service delivery. This document is designed to communicate our activities and aspirations to members of the public in an engaging and easy to read format. The Annual Report also highlights where our efforts and resources will be directed in the future. The report highlights where we have done well, identifies new incident trends and explores areas for improvement. It is an important demonstration of our community risk management planning processes. You can read a copy of the *latest annual report [here](#)

Community Risk Management Plan 2022/26 (CRMP)

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service has produced a detailed CRMP outlining how we will reduce risk from fire and other emergencies between 2022 and 2026. The plan was published following extensive consultation and research to ensure our response, prevention, protection and people and wellbeing strategies consider current and future risks to our communities, businesses and infrastructure. You can read a copy of the CRMP [here](#).

Our CRMP aligns directly with the county council's vision and corporate objectives highlighting how we will work with statutory agencies, businesses and communities. The plan also outlines how we will carry out our statutory responsibility to support national emergencies in other parts of the UK. To ensure our planning remains current, key strategic risks are subject to regular review and analysis. Consideration of new and emerging risks are built into a horizon scanning and planning process.

Operational

OFRS functions within a clearly defined statutory and policy framework. As highlighted earlier, we address these core functions through our Community Risk Management Plan which identifies and assesses foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect our community. You can find out more about legislative duties that govern fire and rescue services by following the hyperlinks at the end of this document.

Emergency Response

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service responded to 6341 incidents between 2022 and 2023. Incidents ranged from wildfires caused by extreme summer temperatures to road traffic collisions. The Service also responded to special service calls with incident types including large animal rescues to supporting our blue light partners. This included helping to gain access to properties for paramedics where vulnerable injured people required medical care.

Between 2022 and 2023 our crews attended **6341** incidents in total. This included:

- 1451 fires
- 309 fires in people homes
- 151 fires in commercial properties
- 438 road traffic collisions
- 1799 Special services calls
- 176 Incidents of flooding
- 3097 Automatic fire alarms

We are a predominantly rural Service crewed by firefighters working shift and duty systems that reflect the response and risk profile of station areas.

Our operational response is provided through 25 stations and a dedicated team of 576 firefighters. This includes:

- 3 stations which are crewed by Whole Time firefighters 24/7 and On-Call
- 3 stations crewed during the day by Whole Time firefighters moving to an On-Call response during the evenings and at night
- 19 On-Call stations

Our crews are actively engaged in work to prevent incidents happening in the first place. They lead and support on a wide range of prevention activities in people's homes, schools, hospitals, community venues and local businesses. In addition, firefighters continue to build their understanding of risks in their area by visiting commercial premises.

We aim to attend 80% of all incidents within 11 minutes and 95% within 14 minutes of a call. Unfortunately, our performance reduced by 2% across both these targets compared to the year before. Between 2022/23 we attended 72% of incidents under 11 minutes and 84% of all incidents in under 14 minute. Response times are the ideal standards we set ourselves to get to an emergency. Many different factors can affect attendance times including the weather, road traffic conditions, the location of the nearest appliance, availability of crews etc. We have a dedicated Resource Management Team who pro-actively monitor and manage staffing on a daily basis to ensure appropriate crewing levels are maintained.

Over 50% (342) of our firefighters are employed through the On-Call duty system. On-Call duty firefighters are trained and equipped to the same standards as full-time firefighters. When required they are mobilised to a fire station directly from their home or work address. On-Call firefighters are often closely connected to their communities as they live or work close to the stations they respond to. Their ability to reach out and understand their communities supports our ability to better target our prevention work.

However, it has become an increasing challenge to recruit and retain sufficient numbers of On-Call firefighters. This is a national problem affecting Services based in predominantly rural areas. Lifestyles and social expectations are rapidly changing. Many people are unable to respond from their places of work or due to other personal care and social commitments. To address this decline the Service is working on a number of initiatives to attract members of the community who would normally never consider becoming an On Call firefighter. The Service is carrying out a comprehensive review across the service this includes monitoring different response models to ensure we meet current and future risks.

Prevention activity

The Prevention Department delivers education, advice and support targeting three risk areas i.e., fire, water and road safety. These activities are aimed at helping communities reduce and avoid incidents from happening in the first place. Between 2022/23 we rolled out a wide range of initiatives linked to our vision to make Oxfordshire one of the healthiest and safest counties in the country. This included:

- Carrying out 2849 Safe and Well visits targeting those most vulnerable to fire. Advice and support was given by our Prevention Team and fire crews to residents on how to avoid fires happening in the first place. These visits included checking and fitting smoke alarms where required. Our frontline staff are trained to look at wider issues and more than 32% of these visits resulted in a referral for additional support being made to our partner agencies.

A customer satisfaction evaluation exercise of this activity recorded a 100% satisfaction rate.

- In 2023 we launched a “#bewateraware” campaign to reduce the number of accidental drownings. This initiative involved engaging with and educating communities at many local events as well as through social media campaigning.
- Educating and developing the next generation to be safe and healthy has been a key plank of the Services prevention strategy. Between 2022/23 we visited 122 schools to talk about fire safety and carried out 173 safety cycling “Bikeability” courses benefitting 4,103 children.
- In 2022, 350 motorcyclists were killed in Great Britain, whilst 5,618 were reported to be seriously injured and 10,975 slightly injured. Our Prevention Team delivered 21 “Bikerdown” motorcycle safety training sessions reaching 221 bikers. Professional tutors provided practical skills and advice on avoiding crashes as well as how to provide lifesaving first aid to those involved in a motorcycle accident.

In 2022-23 we also implemented a new four-year prevention strategy that prioritised:

- Using data and links with our partner agencies to ensure we effectively target those most at risk to accidents and fire in our communities
- Developing digital solutions including introducing a mobile tablet app for crews to use when carrying out safe and well visits
- Evaluating our work and using an evidence-based approach to ensure we continuously learn and adapt how we work
- Increasing collaboration with other statutory and voluntary sector organisations
- Developing and rolling out a competency based framework to ensure our staff have a high standard of knowledge and understanding when carrying out Safe and Wells.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding continues to remain a priority for OFRS. Many of our frontline staff are uniquely placed and trusted by our communities. We often learn about issues ranging from hoarding, falls risk and isolation that others might be unaware of. The service collaborates with wide ranging partners connecting health, social care, and voluntary services to identify and support vulnerable members of the community.

In 2022/23 we ran 40 Safeguarding training sessions for over 370 front line staff. As result of regular training and learning, we recorded over 350 concerns being reported for additional social and welfare support services following a Safe and Well visit or an incident we attended.

The Service also participates in Oxfordshire's Annual Safeguarding Board's, peer review assessment and were pleased to have achieved a positive rating across each of the standards set by the board. You can read a copy of the most recent Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board Report [here](#).

Culture and Leadership

His Majesties, Inspector of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in 2021-22 reported that OFRS has a positive culture, supported health and wellbeing, and was worked hard to listen to staff. OFRS have continued to build positive cultures through regular staff engagement, monitoring diversity and community centred service delivery to help create a fully inclusive and diverse organisation. This includes aligning with the aspirations set out within the National Fire Chiefs Council's Core code of Ethics and inclusive behaviours.

Our values and vision encompasses our lived values and expectations at every level of the organisation. These are captured in the following four statements:

- **Be kind and care.** We value our staff; we respect and treat everyone with understanding and compassion; we care not just for our customers but each other. We take care of our own and others wellbeing.
- **Taking responsibility,** we hold ourselves accountable, take responsibility for what and how we deliver; we give and seek to be empowered to make a difference; we actively contribute to delivering the best for all
- **Daring to do it differently.** We innovate, we look to do things differently and improve the way we do things every day; we're not satisfied with the status quo and work creatively to solve problems.
- **Equality and integrity.** We embrace equality, diversity and inclusion valuing the difference in others. We always act with integrity, working in honest, ethical and supportive ways, building effective relationships; we trust each other to do what we promise.

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service works hard to support and engage staff. Regular communication through in person and online resources such as "keeping you connected" and "Your Voice Matters" allow our staff to not only hear about the latest developments but engage with them. We also have a number of active staff networks and resources to support physical and mental wellbeing.

You can read about our efforts to develop a forward thinking and inclusive organisation in our *2022/23 annual report.

Fire Protection Activity

Our Fire Protection department continues to build on the successes from the previous year. Central government funding aimed at preventing future tragedies and learning from events such as Grenfell Towers enabled us to invest and improve our staff training, systems, and capacity. Key activities included:

Improved business engagement

Our business engagement lead delivered key themed activities targeting premises identified through the audit process. Between 2022 and 2023, our campaign work focused on visiting over 140 premises providing guesthouse and bed and breakfast facilities. Businesses were provided with leaflets and advice to help them comply with the latest fire safety legislation. This activity was run alongside an engaging social media campaign which recorded over 18,000 viewing engagements. Our*Primary Authority team also entered into two new agreements with social housing providers to provide assured management of fire safety advice.

*A Primary Authority agreement enables local authorities to improve compliance and build enhanced relationships with specific businesses. Our Fire Protection Team partnered with organisations that support vulnerable people to provide advice related to regulatory Fire Safety.

Fire Safety Audits

The Fire Protection uplift grant allowed us to continue to employ additional, qualified fire safety inspectors to undertake auditing and enforcement work. This continued investment enabled us to complete 566 fire safety building audits to be completed, a 13% increase compared to the previous year. Our fire safety audits use a clear risk-based approach to ensure that we focus on protecting Oxfordshire's most vulnerable communities from fire. We have continued to upskill our staff across the department to ensure we continue to meet, and often exceed, the requirements of the national competency framework. This included specialist courses being provided to improve fire safety in schools, hospitals and heritage buildings.

False Alarms

The number of false alarm incidents at commercial premises rose by 3% (3097) compared to the year before. While this rise may be related to more premises being equipped with fire detection systems, false alarms continue to be a disruptive and inefficient use of valuable operational resources locally and nationally. The Service engages in robust and pro-active discussion with business to ensure crews are only called out to respond to confirmed fires. This is balanced with ensuring safety where fire in high-risk premises where fire is suspected. A collaborative project planned with neighbouring Thames Valley fire and rescue services between 2023-24 has the objective of reducing false alarms as much as possible.

Fire Investigation Collaboration

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service has led an ambitious collaborative project with Thames Valley Police and our two Thames Valley fire and rescue service partners to establish an ISO accredited joint forensic fire scene investigation unit. This project will ensure all our forensic investigation activities and evidence is delivered to demanding ISO standards so that it remains admissible in court.

Risk Information

A revised site-specific risk information system with improved mapping and supporting data has significantly enhanced the ability of our firefighters to quickly access safety critical hazard information on all medium and high-risk sites. This information is easily available to operational crews attending incidents through mobile data terminals installed in appliances or through portable devices.

Employee Relations and Resources

The Employment, Relations and Resource Team have continued to support the organisation by leading recruitment events and selection processes which have seen 43 On Call Firefighters pass the required tests. 28% of those that were successful were women and an improvement on the previous year. The Team have also facilitated training for managers to help them to have effective one-to-one meetings with their staff. This will result in both improved wellbeing and subsequently performance. The Employee, Relations and Resource Team has also improved our processes following an internal pay audit to ensure compliance.

Wellbeing for our employees is always at the front of our thoughts and this is reflected in our absence rates for our Wholetime Firefighters.

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service have the third lowest absence levels compared with over 40 fire and rescue services that report on this.

We have identified areas of improvement which includes ensuring our staff reflect the communities we serve. This includes carrying out positive engagement activities to encourage more women and people from minority ethnic backgrounds to apply. Although our messaging and imagery is inclusive, the number of people applying and successfully passing tests from ethnically diverse backgrounds is still very low.

Health and Safety

Driving a positive Health Safety and Wellbeing culture remains a key priority for the Service. In 2022/23, the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team completed an internal audit process followed by a peer audit from our southeast regional fire and rescue partners. We were really pleased with the results and areas of improvements identified are being actively addressed. A further comprehensive audit is planned for 2023/24.

Key achievements include:

- Improved Health and Safety recording through a revised electronic recording system
- Prioritising wellbeing through providing access to webinars on financial wellbeing as well as mental health and physical wellbeing resources.
- Over 99% of our Firefighters passed their annual fitness tests

Operational Learning, Training and Development

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service places great importance on operational staff being highly skilled and knowledgeable, enabling them to respond safely to different types of emergencies at any time. Training is delivered through a range of methods ranging from on station firefighting practice to major exercises involving blue light partners, emergency planning officers and specialist advisors. Firefighters are exposed to wide ranging training scenarios ranging from those created using virtual reality modelling at our state-of-the-art VRX suite in Slade, to large commercial building fire simulations at the National Fire College or water rescue training at the Wallingford Hydrology centre.

Training Instructors have nationally recognised teaching and assessing qualifications covering breathing apparatus, road traffic collision and water rescue. Our training team has enhanced its capability to assess at nationally accredited Skills for Justice (SFJ) levels. We can now provide in house training and assessment from firefighter to station manager level.

Innovative and inclusive training material to support varied learning styles has been developed and introduced through 2022-23. Training packages have been refreshed and re-launched into videos and recorded formats. A review of the training and recording database has resulted in software refresh in 2023 -2024. Managers will be able to better monitor training and staff competence while firefighters will have enhanced access to training material across a range of mobile platforms.

Key achievements during 2022-23 include:

- The Incident Command Development team running 157 courses and assessments to develop command skills and competence.
- Our Training Teams led 242 core training courses including breathing apparatus, initial firefighter training, casualty care, working at height, and water rescue.
- The Driving Centre team delivered 77 emergency specialist driving skills courses covering fire engines to response cars. Emergency driver training courses could vary in length from a single day to ten days of input.
- The Training Team also facilitated a wide range of external specialist training ranging from hazardous material tactical courses to improving internal audit processes.

National Fire Standards

The National Fire Standards are a set of professional expectations for fire and rescue services in England. The standards establish a “benchmark” of what good practice looks like. They are an important consideration that HMICFRS Inspectors refer to when measuring performance in fire and rescue services. We are continuing to ensure that our existing processes and systems align with National Fire Standards. Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service have also regularly contributed to the development of new standards. You can read more about the National Fire Standards [here](#).

National Operational Guidance

National Operational Guidance provides industry good practice for fire and rescue services within the UK to develop local policies and procedures. Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service continued to work through 2022-23 to align our hazard, risk and training information with nationally agreed operational standards.

Emergency Planning

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service supports emergency planning and business continuity from major events through its membership of the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum (LRF) risk group and by integrating more widely with the LRF and Oxfordshire County Council response strategy. The service also chairs the LRF CBRN (Chemical Biological Radioactive and Nuclear) group and engages in regular interoperability training with Category 1 and 2 responders.

Notable achievements of 2022 and 2023 include:

- 1112 business given business continuity advice to help ensure they are prepared for emergencies.
- 53 community resilience events attended to ensure Oxfordshire residents are prepared for emergencies.
- 2742 community resilience bags issued to ensure that vulnerable residents have contact phone numbers and information to prepare for emergencies and support attending emergency services.
- Supporting RAF Brize Norton to run a Major Accident Control plan exercised with multi agency partners.
- Supporting communities through major emergency road closures, heat wave, water and gas leaks.

National and Local Risk Assessments

The National and Local Risk Assessment considers severe weather events, pandemics, and major industrial accidents that could seriously impact on significant parts of the UK. This assessment is considered alongside our own Community Risk Registers to help the Service and Local Resilience Forum (LRF's) plan for major events in our County.

Technology and Innovation

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service constantly assesses equipment and new technological solutions with neighbouring Services to equip staff with the ability to respond to incidents safely and effectively. The new enhanced Breathing Apparatus sets purchased as part of a collaborative project will ensure our firefighters have the latest equipment to enable them to operate safely in fire situations.

Improving how we utilise technology also extends to the preventative services we deliver to communities. In 2022-23, the Service introduced fully portable, internet enabled tablets allowing crews to refer vulnerable people to other services and access risk information on high-risk premises.

A project to improve how managers record, monitor and manage performance information is being developed. The “In-Phase-Unity” platform will be integrated directly into Oxfordshire County Councils performance management system and support more effective service planning and reporting.

Collaborative arrangements

HMICFRS Inspectors were pleased to discover that the Service met its statutory duties to collaborate and routinely consider opportunities with other emergency responders. The Services approach to joint working was recognised as “good” and aligned with the priorities in the CRMP. For example, our partnership with Thames Valley blue light partners has resulted in an enhanced ability to provide ISO standard Fire Investigation evidence. This means that evidence and information produced following a fire is legally admissible in a court of law.

Collaboration with other Service providers has realised wide area benefits ranging from improved training, shared learning and enhanced procurement and purchasing efficiencies to support standardising emergency response across County borders. An example of this is the joint purchase, development and roll out of new breathing apparatus sets. This not only reduced costs but allows three neighbouring countries to better integrate their emergency response at cross border incidents.

Prevent

The Channel Panel is an early intervention programme chaired by Oxfordshire’s, Chief Fire Officer to support people who are at risk of radicalisation. The programme continues to provide practical support tailored to individual needs through helping them make positive choices about their lives. The Prevent scheme utilises a multi-agency safeguarding framework set up between local authorities to collaborate on issues related to reducing radicalisation.

Business and Corporate Services

Our Business and Executive Services Team support a number of vital functions across the Service. This includes maintenance and replacement of all our operational assets including our fire engines and other vehicles, uniforms and PPE, procurement and contracts as well as managing all the buildings used by the fire service (25 fire stations). The Team work hard to deliver the Councils vision for a more sustainable and environmentally service and where practical we have steadily replaced polluting diesel and petrol vehicles with electric ones.

Between 2023 and 2024 we will be working on an exciting project to look at upgrading and developing two of our fire stations. This includes establishing a partnership with local business to significantly re-develop and modernise Rewley Road station. At the same time we are developing plans to build a community safety education centre as well as developing new firefighter training facilities. Most of our fire stations were built over 50 years ago and we want to make sure they are fit for the future.

Gypsy and Traveller Services

Oxfordshire County Council has a duty of care to all Gypsy and Travellers within the county and will address their welfare, health and educational needs. Gypsy and Traveller Services is committed to ensuring that all issues that affect Travellers staying on land within the county are supported in a fair and positive manner. In 2022/23, Oxfordshire County Council received £362,090 in rent payments from the 6 permanent Gypsy and Traveller sites we are responsible for. We also attended 28 unauthorised encampments in the county and supported business and landowners with advice on how to prevent unsuitable encampments occurring in the first place.

Trading Standards

The Trading Standards Service fulfils the County Council's responsibilities for the enforcement of a wide range of consumer protection and public safety legislation. The responsibilities of the Service are widespread and include:

Legal metrology (weights and measures), product safety, food and farming standards, trade representations and trademarks, unfair trading practices, animal health, disease control and welfare, environmental requirements, price marking and price comparisons, supply of age restricted products, licensing and inspection of explosives and petroleum storage facilities, safety certification of sports grounds.

Notable achievements in 2022/23 include:

- 2718 people directly reached with trading standards preventative advice and support.
- 1377 interventions conducted with businesses, including visits, provision of advice, sampling and testing activities.
- 100% of high-risk food standards inspections completed.
- 246 'Friends Against Scams' recruited.
- £220,000 saved or recovered for victims of doorstep crime, scams and other forms of financial abuse.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services - Inspection report 2021/22

The *HMICFRS 2021/22 inspection report is an important independent examination of performance across Oxfordshire FRS.

The Service were really pleased to have been awarded a "good" rating in the three inspection areas covering effectiveness, efficiency and how we look after our people. HMICFRS inspectors found that:

- The Service's understanding of risk and demand was effective and supported its prevention and protection activities.
- Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service was financially stable and well supported by the County Council and has a very positive culture that actively promotes equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- Support for health and wellbeing was excellent and the Service was working hard to listen to staff.

Areas within the HMICFRS identified as being 'areas for improvement' have been embedded into our improvement planning process. We are also assessing and embedding the recommendations of the HMICFRS spotlight report into Values and Culture, in UK Fire & Rescue Services into our ambitious cultural development plan.

Business continuity National Pay Dispute

As with many other public services, the fire and rescue sector faced a national pay dispute in 2022/23 with the potential for industrial action. Even though firefighters are employed by Oxfordshire County Council, pay and conditions are negotiated at a national level through the National Joint Council (NJC). These disputes are always very difficult for employees and their families, but the service's priorities remained focussed on maintaining safe levels of emergency cover for Oxfordshire's communities.

The imminent threat of industrial action led to a review of the service's planning and business continuity arrangements in the event strike action occurred. This root and branch review between October and February culminated in a number of large-scale exercises involving our Thames Valley fire and rescue service partners. Improvements to our planning arrangements were made to ensure we have a resilient process in place to maintain emergency cover during any period of industrial action.

Further information

Legislative frameworks that govern Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Services Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue functions within a clearly defined statutory and policy framework. The key documents setting this out are:

- [The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#)
- [The Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)
- [The Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)
- [The Fire and Rescue Services \(Emergencies\) \(England\) Order 2007](#)
- [The Localism Act 2011](#)
- [The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#)

Further reading

- [The Council Constitution](#)
 - [Annual Accounts and Audit](#)
 - [The National Fire Standards](#)
 - [The HMICFRS Spotlight Cultural Review](#)
- * Community Safety Services – Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Services Annual Report 2022/23 (*link to be added on final publication*)