

SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**3 SEPTEMBER 2012****Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service - Integrated Corporate Risk Reduction Strategy****Report by the Chief Fire Officer****Background**

1. Traditionally, the role of a Fire & Rescue Service (FRS) has been seen as four-fold: fighting fires, rescuing people, enforcing fire protection in businesses and providing fire prevention advice to householders. This national approach was given local flexibility back in 2004 with the development of Integrated Risk Management Planning, which advocated the use of evidence-based processes and activities to drive down and effectively respond to the identified risks in local communities, at the same time as providing value for money to the local taxpayer.
2. However, as part of the wider Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS) has now taken those risk-reduction principles and used them proactively to support and benefit the broader community safety agenda, not only of its parent organisation but also its local partners, such as the Police and Health Service, in order to tackle a much wider range of community safety issues.
3. Add to this the growing variety and complexity of the emergency response expectations being placed up on OFRS (such as water, mud & ice rescue, building collapse, hazardous materials identification and containment and road traffic collisions) not to mention our responsibilities for civil protection during major or catastrophic incidents and the picture emerges of a multi-faceted, multi-skilled and safety-conscious organisation focused on its “365-Alive” vision. The intention and direction of travel is that Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service will be most integrated in the UK by adding value to others thus creating a safer Oxfordshire.
4. To assist with this, OFRS has developed a ‘**Safer by Design**’ business strategy 2011/12 – 2014/15 that was agreed/ endorsed by Cabinet in November 2010.
5. “Safer by Design” is our vision for self-reliant safer communities, with enabling actions and resources provided or commissioned by Oxfordshire County Council, working in partnership with a range of third parties. Intelligence led, locality specific approaches will identify practical preventative measures delivered through internal resources and via community based partnerships, which will address many of the emerging societal risks.
6. The “Safer by Design” vision has four main strands of activity which are:
 - a) **Growing in confidence** – a strategy for safer young people
 - b) **Living in confidence** – a strategy for the residents of Oxfordshire

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- c) **Travelling in confidence** – a strategy for those on the move
 - d) **Working in confidence** – a strategy for business.
7. Attached in Annex 1 are some early examples of the positive areas of work that OFRS is already either engaged with or are developing further in order to integrate more effectively with other OCC directorates, partners or services.
8. Although the Fire Service will always maintain a reactive/999 response to calls for assistance, the main emphasis of the Council's approach towards delivering a safer society is intended to be via preventative and educational measures, delivered by multi-skilled employees, voluntary agencies and other partners who can take practical actions as extra eyes and ears (and where appropriate hands) of the County Council, promoting risk awareness, self-help, safeguarding and sign-posting specialist assistance and support when required. This approach is specifically designed to embrace the preventative agenda and reduce the call upon other Council services such as Adult Care.
9. To ensure we deliver maximum value for money and to help deliver a safer Oxfordshire by 2015, OFRS seeks to:
- Focus predominantly on 'Prevention and Protection' activities to minimise the need for 'Response' resources
 - Maximise productive use of the 'standing assets' (capital assets, people and 'brand') delivering directly or co-ordinating third party actions designed to improve community safety
 - Have developed a range of specific activities (minimum one scheme in each of the 14 localities) designed to meet local needs to improve community safety
 - Have implemented wider corporate and community use of Fire Stations
 - Have used volunteers and other partners to:
 - Increase the number of referrals from other agencies identifying potential threats to or vulnerable people requiring services (Rogue Traders, Domestic Violence Reports, Home Fire Safety Checks)
 - Conduct specific activities on behalf of the Council, eg. Home Fire Safety checks fitting smoke alarms/security products
 - Provide youth programmes, e.g. Junior Citizen activities.
 - Have developed and implemented effective data sharing protocols with Social and Community Services recognising the common customer base allowing for a common data base and a targeted proactive intervention programme
 - Have exploited synergies between the Fire and Rescue Service and Social and Community Services support services allowing for integration where effective
 - Continue to deliver excellent Customer Service by exploiting the 'can do' attitudes of response staff
 - Be intelligence-led and using customer analysis to target support to 'at risk' and vulnerable groups and communities
 - Facilitate the most efficient contribution to local community safety priorities from County resources
 - Have developed an integrated Road Safety team working with partners to maintain the reduction of those killed and seriously injured on Oxfordshire's roads.
 - Be working collaboratively with same sector partners to increase efficiency, effectiveness and resilience¹

¹ e.g. Fire and Rescue Service collaborative working initiatives in Thames Valley

Conclusion

10. Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service remains one of the best performing and most progressive brigades in the UK. We recognise that we can assist in tackling wider societal issues and that this developing work 'beyond the traditional role of a fire-fighter' assists us as 'one team' within the county council to help meet the identified prevention and/or efficiency initiatives, as well as tackling some wider community safety needs through targeted collaboration.
11. It is recognised that OFRS has a unique and neutral brand that is trusted and respected within the communities in Oxfordshire. It is well known that we are widely accepted and usually welcomed across every household and in every school in the county and we will assist other partners, staff and officers where we can to collectively work together to solve problems as a team.
12. We are striving to maximise opportunities by ensuring that we our activities are aligned to the work of other directorates and services so that we remain high performing, low cost and create a safer Oxfordshire.

Recommendations

The Safer and Stronger Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- 1. Note the contents of this report and to note the progress on the overall direction of travel within the program of OFRS risk reduction activity.**
- 2. To comment on further areas which could be considered to improve integration or outcomes.**

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Background papers: Attached as Annexes

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August 2012