

## Notice of a Meeting

### **Safer & Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee** **Monday, 3 September 2012 at 10.00 am** **County Hall, Oxford, OX1 1ND**

#### Membership

Chairman - Councillor Lawrie Stratford  
Deputy Chairman - Councillor Stewart Lilly

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

#### Notes:

***Date of next meeting: 12 November 2012***

#### **What does this Committee review or scrutinise?**

- Community safety; anti-social behaviour; crime and the fear of crime; fire and rescue; consumer protection; emergency planning; police issues; coroner's service; gypsies and travellers; drugs and alcohol awareness; road safety (police, trading standards, fire and rescue); adult learning (oversight of the adult learning service in provider mode); libraries; museums and heritage; the arts; archives; leisure and recreation; registration service; community cohesion; voluntary and community sector.
- The functions of the responsible authorities (local authorities, fire and rescue authorities, police authorities, the police, primary care trusts and the Probation Service) which comprise a Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership/Community Safety Partnership.
- Those regulatory functions of the Planning & Regulation Committee not falling within the remit of the Growth & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee.

#### **How can I have my say?**

We welcome the views of the community on any issues in relation to the responsibilities of this Committee. Members of the public may ask to speak on any item on the agenda or may suggest matters which they would like the Committee to look at. **Requests to speak must be submitted to the Committee Officer below no later than 9 am on the working day before the date of the meeting.**

#### **For more information about this Committee please contact:**

Chairman	- Councillor Lawrie Stratford
	E.Mail: lawrie.stratford@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Committee Officer	- Kathrin Luddecke, Tel: (01865) 323965
	kathrin.luddecke@oxfordshire.gov.uk



Peter G. Clark  
County Solicitor

August 2012

## About the County Council

The Oxfordshire County Council is made up of 74 councillors who are democratically elected every four years. The Council provides a range of services to Oxfordshire's 630,000 residents. These include:

schools	social & health care	libraries and museums
the fire service	roads	trading standards
land use	transport planning	waste management

Each year the Council manages £0.9 billion of public money in providing these services. Most decisions are taken by a Cabinet of 9 Councillors, which makes decisions about service priorities and spending. Some decisions will now be delegated to individual members of the Cabinet.

## About Scrutiny

Scrutiny is about:

- Providing a challenge to the Cabinet
- Examining how well the Cabinet and the Authority are performing
- Influencing the Cabinet on decisions that affect local people
- Helping the Cabinet to develop Council policies
- Representing the community in Council decision making
- Promoting joined up working across the authority's work and with partners

Scrutiny is NOT about:

- Making day to day service decisions
- Investigating individual complaints.

## What does this Committee do?

The Committee meets up to 6 times a year or more. It develops a work programme, which lists the issues it plans to investigate. These investigations can include whole committee investigations undertaken during the meeting, or reviews by a panel of members doing research and talking to lots of people outside of the meeting. Once an investigation is completed the Committee provides its advice to the Cabinet, the full Council or other scrutiny committees. Meetings are open to the public and all reports are available to the public unless exempt or confidential, when the items would be considered in closed session

**If you have any special requirements (such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities) please contact the officer named on the front page, giving as much notice as possible before the meeting**

**A hearing loop is available at County Hall.**

# AGENDA

## 1. Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments

The chairman, Cllr Lawrie Stratford, has sent his apologies. In his absence, the deputy chairman, Cllr Stewart Lilly, will chair this meeting.

## 2. Declarations of Interest - see guidance note on the back page

## 3. Minutes

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 18 June (**SSC3**) and to note for information any matters arising from them.

## 4. Speaking to or petitioning the Committee

### SCRUTINY MATTERS

## 5. Director's Update

10.10

The Head of Law and Governance, Peter Clark, will give a verbal update on key issues affecting relevant services.

## 6. Libraries Strategy Implementation - Update

10.20

Karen Warren, Cultural Services Manager, will give an update on the progress of implementation of the libraries strategy. (**SSC6**).

## 7. Director's Update - Fire & Rescue and Community Safety

11.00

The Chief Fire Officer and Head of Community Safety, David Etheridge, will give a verbal update on key issues affecting relevant services.

## 8. Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service - Integrated Corporate Risk Reduction Strategy

11.15

Nathan Travis, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, will give an overview of the strategy (**SSC8 with Annex**).

## **9. Review of Payday Lending**

**11.30**

Kate Davies, Trading Standards Team Leader, will provide an overview (**SSC9**).

## **10. Citizens Advice Bureau Consumer Empowerment Project**

**11.50**

Kate Davies, Trading Standards Team Leader, will give an overview of this pilot project run by the Oxford Citizens Advice Bureau, in which Oxfordshire Trading Standards is a partner organisation (**SSC10**).

### **BUSINESS PLANNING**

## **11. Scrutiny Work Programme**

**12.15**

The committee is invited to comment on the draft forward plan for future meetings which will be circulated to members before the meeting.

## **12. Close of Meeting**

**12.25**

## Declarations of Interest

### The duty to declare.....

Under the Localism Act 2011 it is a criminal offence to

- (a) fail to register a disclosable pecuniary interest within 28 days of election or co-option (or re-election or re-appointment), or
- (b) provide false or misleading information on registration, or
- (c) participate in discussion or voting in a meeting on a matter in which the member or co-opted member has a disclosable pecuniary interest.

### Whose Interests must be included?

The Act provides that the interests which must be notified are those of a member or co-opted member of the authority, **or**

- those of a spouse or civil partner of the member or co-opted member;
- those of a person with whom the member or co-opted member is living as husband/wife
- those of a person with whom the member or co-opted member is living as if they were civil partners.

(in each case where the member or co-opted member is aware that the other person has the interest).

### What if I remember that I have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest during the Meeting?

The Code requires that, at a meeting, where a member or co-opted member has a disclosable interest (of which they are aware) in any matter being considered, they disclose that interest to the meeting. The Council will continue to include an appropriate item on agendas for all meetings, to facilitate this.

Although not explicitly required by the legislation or by the code, it is recommended that in the interests of transparency and for the benefit of all in attendance at the meeting (including members of the public) the nature as well as the existence of the interest is disclosed.

A member or co-opted member who has disclosed a pecuniary interest at a meeting must not participate (or participate further) in any discussion of the matter; and must not participate in any vote or further vote taken; and must withdraw from the room.

Members are asked to continue to pay regard to the following provisions in the code that *“You must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself”* or *“You must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned.....”*.

Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer prior to the meeting should you have any doubt about your approach.

### List of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests:

**Employment** (includes *“any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain”*.), **Sponsorship, Contracts, Land, Licences, Corporate Tenancies, Securities.**

For a full list of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and further Guidance on this matter please see the Guide to the New Code of Conduct and Register of Interests at Members’ conduct guidelines. <http://intranet.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wps/wcm/connect/occ/Insite/Elected+members/> or contact Rachel Dunn on (01865) 815279 or [Rachel.dunn@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Rachel.dunn@oxfordshire.gov.uk) for a hard copy of the document.

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## **SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES** of the meeting held on Monday, 18 June 2012 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 1.20 pm

**Present:**

**Voting Members:**

Councillor Lawrie Stratford – in the Chair

Councillor Stewart Lilly (Deputy Chairman)

Councillor John Goddard

Councillor Patrick Greene

Councillor Susanna Pressel

Councillor Bill Service

Councillor Chip Sherwood

Councillor Alan Thompson

Councillor Ray Jelf (In place of Councillor Carol Viney)

Councillor Charles Mathew (In place of Councillor Anthony Gearing)

Councillor Judith Heathcoat

**Other Members in**

**Attendance:**

**Officers:**

Whole of meeting

Kathrin Luddecke

Part of meeting

**Agenda Item**

**Officer Attending**

5

Peter Clark

6

Jacquie Bugeja, Karen Warren, Jillian Southwell

7

Vicky Field, Mike Bardsley

8

David Etheridge

9, 10

Richard Webb

11, 12

Colin Thomas

13

David Etheridge, Colin Thomas

*The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting] and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports are attached to the signed Minutes.*

### **27/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS**

(Agenda No. 1)

Councillor Charles Mathew substituted for Councillor Anthony Gearing. Councillor Ray Jelf substituted for Councillor Carol Viney.

### **28/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE BACK PAGE**

(Agenda No. 2)

The chairman declared an interest under item 10 in his position as chairman of the trustees of the Bicester Citizens Advice Bureau.

## **29/12 MINUTES**

(Agenda No. 3)

The minutes of the meetings held on 30 April and 15 May (**SSC3a, b**) were approved as a correct record and signed by the chairman.

Matters arising from the meeting of 30 April:

- Item 14/12: Councillor Lilly had liaised with the council's Business Continuity Manager and gave an update about feedback from those affected
- Item 22/12: Councillor Pressel queried progress with fundraising efforts and discussions about City archives; Karen Warren responded with a brief update
- Item 23/12: confirmed the committee's draft forward plan would be circulated

## **30/12 SPEAKING TO OR PETITIONING THE COMMITTEE**

(Agenda No. 4)

There were no speakers or petitions.

## **31/12 DIRECTOR'S UPDATE - REGISTRATION, CORONER'S SERVICES AND CULTURAL SERVICES**

(Agenda No. 5)

The Head of Law and Governance, Peter Clark, gave a verbal update on the Registration, Coroner's, Library, Museums, History and Archives services. He highlighted particular achievements and changes, including two new appointments:

- Darren Salter will replace Nicholas G Gardiner as Coroner for Oxfordshire
- Karen Warren has been appointed as Cultural Services Manager.

Members of the committee:

- Expressed their thanks to Nicholas G Gardiner for his dedicated work over 40 years and wished him a happy and long retirement
- Congratulated Karen on her appointment.

They also paid tribute to the Registration and Coroner's Service for their contribution to the 36 repatriations to date and to the Jubilee citizenship celebrations.

## **32/12 REVIEW OF MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICES**

(Agenda No. 6)

Councillor Heathcoat, the Cabinet Member for Cultural Services, introduced this item, noting that:

- Oxfordshire Library Services' aim is to be a service that is fit for purpose and the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with a static and mobile service that complement each other and provide a comprehensive service
- The proposed review of mobile services is about efficiencies not cuts, with single staffing introduced on two routes and a third of savings already delivered



- Its scope is to review stops and timetables with a view not to reduce the service, but deliver it to more people, meeting individual and local community needs.

Jillian Southwell, Library Service Manager, followed on giving further details about the background, aims and format of the proposed review. She answered a range of questions from members including about different elements of the service, usage and promotion. She invited the committee to consider how it could support the work of the project group and stakeholders identified.

**AGREED** that selected committee members will be a stakeholder in the proposed review, with the chairman to confirm members to be involved.

### **33/12 OXFORDSHIRE ADULT LEARNING - UPDATE** (Agenda No. 7)

The chairman noted that while this update had been requested by the committee, responsibility for Adult Learning is expected to lie to Councillor Tilley, Cabinet Member for Education, and a different scrutiny committee in future. Councillor Heathcoat confirmed that the service had not been part of her portfolio since October 2011.

Vicky Field, Operational HR Manager, and Mike Bardsley, Skills and Learning Manager, presented the report circulated (**SSC7**) and responded to questions raised by members. Areas discussed included the very positive recent Ofsted report, location of learning centres and provision from other venues, balance of in-house and other providers, outcomes and targets for learners, the First Steps programme and trends for English as a Second Language (ESOL) provision.

**AGREED** that Mike Bardsley will circulate information about courses and numbers of learners. Also **AGREED** for details of comments made by members to be passed on to the relevant scrutiny committee taking on responsibility for the service.

### **34/12 DIRECTOR'S UPDATE - FIRE & RESCUE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY** (Agenda No. 8)

David Etheridge, Chief Fire Officer and Head of Community Safety, updated the committee about key issues. These included the Police and Crime Commissioner and Panel and an update about prosecutions following the accidental death of three Warwickshire fire fighters.

Councillor Mathew asked for thanks to be recorded for Joe Wilkins' contribution to the Eynsham Fire Service who lost his life in a cycling accident three weeks ago.

### **35/12 REGULATORY & INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT (RIPA) - UPDATE** (Agenda No. 9)

Richard Webb, Acting Head of Trading Standards and Community Safety, explained the legal requirement for information on the council's use of its powers under the Act to be brought to the committee and spoke to the report circulated (**SSC9**).

Richard Webb indicated that the government's commitment to change local authorities' rights to surveillance is likely to require changes to the council's policy in the autumn. He explained the main direction of the proposed changes and requested the committee to authorise the Head of Legal Services and the Director of Social and Community Services to make any changes required. This was moved, seconded and **AGREED** by the committee, subject to a report being brought back to the committee at the appropriate time.

### **36/12 CONSUMER PROTECTION - UPDATE** (Agenda No. 10)

Richard Webb, Acting Head of Trading Standards and Community Safety, presented an update based on changes announced by the government in its report on Empowering and Protecting Consumers. He noted that the Oxfordshire consortium of Citizens Advice Bureaus (CAB) is receiving funding from Citizens Advice at national level for a consumer empowerment pilot project. Trading Standards remains responsible for enforcement and is involved in the project.

Discussion included:

- The National Trading Standards Board will have one representative from the South East region excluding London, representing 19 local authorities
- Chain of accountability allowing issues based on evidence to be brought up from the grassroots
- Respective responsibilities and close liaison between Oxfordshire CABs and Trading Standards in dealing with enquiries.

In response to a question by Councillor Pressel, it was **AGREED** for Richard Webb to circulate the report by Citizens Advice nationally about the consumer advice service for which it is now responsible, once received.

### **37/12 OFRS RETAINED DUTY SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT** (Agenda No. 11)

Colin Thomas, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, spoke to the report circulated (**SSC11**). He noted the great commitment by retained fire fighters and the reliance of the service on both its whole-time and retained staff. He highlighted recent innovation to allow more flexible use of all resources and the close working with retained staff themselves in continuing to make improvements, as part of the service's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) reported to the committee on previous occasions.

Discussion included Health & Safety in the context of reduced incident numbers, targeted recruitment and the Oxfordshire service attracting a greater than average proportion of female retained staff. Councillor Pressel requested more detailed information which Colin Thomas undertook to send her.

**AGREED** that selected committee members will be involved in supporting this work. The chairman undertook to confirm details based on expressions of interest.

**38/12 SAFE AND SECURE OLYMPIC GAMES**

(Agenda No. 12)

Colin Thomas, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, spoke to the report circulated (**SSC12**). He highlighted that training and exercises undertaken are not specific to this particular event; the benefits and experience gained from them will be retained within the organisation. This work is part of the service's regular business, working closely with others in the council and the statutory Thames Valley Resilience Forum; no additional staff have been appointed or financial resources committed.

**39/12 ROAD SAFETY - UPDATE**

(Agenda No. 13)

Colin Thomas, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, spoke to the report circulated (**SSC13**). As requested by committee members, the update focuses on the positive progress in integrating the Road Safety team into the Fire & Rescue Service since its transfer just over a year ago. He noted that strong links to the Environment & Economy directorate remain in place and referred to their annual report.

In discussions, members also noted concern about cycling accidents in particular and made suggestions on helping schools recruit and thank volunteers for cyclist training. Noted as a correction that table 10 Appendix 6 gives information for the first four months of the current year; previous years are covered in other tables. Officers agreed that while overall trends were downward there is no room for complacency. The role of the Police in enforcement was also noted.

Councillor Heathcoat referred to the work of the Junior Citizen Trust Oxfordshire which she chairs and which is supported by the service, offering advice in different settings to around 4,500 children a year.

In response to a question by Councillor Goddard, David Etheridge noted that he has recently taken on national responsibility for Road Safety, as a dedicated work stream within the Chief Fire Officers Association. This is due to statutory responsibility for Road Safety education, training and publicity having transferred to the Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service as one of the first in the UK (see Appendix 1). The Department for Transport's new strategic framework for road safety includes making available information and data to facilitate intelligence-led management and monitoring going forward.

**AGREED** for a future update to cover developments under the new national framework and to involve Environment & Economy. Colin Thomas undertook to ensure Councillor Greene receives information in relation to concerns about road safety raised by a local school governor.

**40/12 BRIEFING ABOUT EQUALITY ACT AND EQUALITY DUTY**

(Agenda No. 14)

The chairman spoke to the report circulated (**SSC14**), having attended a national briefing on the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Duty. The purpose of bringing this item to the committee was to help scrutiny be mindful of implications.

In response to a question by Councillor Pressel he noted that meeting the Equality Duty does not mean that impacts on particular groups can always be avoided. However, the council needs to be able to demonstrate that it has considered these as part of its decision making and that proportionate actions are taken in mitigation.

**41/12 FORWARD PLAN**  
(Agenda No. 15)

**AGREED** for the committee officer to circulate the committee's draft work plan in advance of the next meeting.

**42/12 CLOSE OF MEETING**  
(Agenda No. 16)

The meeting finished at 1.20pm.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing .....

**Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee  
3 September 2012**

**LIBRARY SERVICE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE**

**REPORT BY HEAD OF LAW AND CULTURE**

**Background**

1. Oxfordshire Library Service is committed to delivering a cost-effective, high quality library service that is fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and that will meet the needs of those living, working and studying in Oxfordshire and that will satisfy the Council's duty under section 7 of the 1964 Act.
2. The Library Service is highly valued by users and stakeholders, delivering services that meet customer need and that contribute to the delivery of the corporate goal of a Thriving Oxfordshire. The Service will now position itself to be sustainable, relevant and available to present and future generations through the delivery of the overall Library Service Strategy as set out in the report to Cabinet of 12 December 2011.

**Library Service Strategy**

3. The report to Cabinet set out the Strategy that will be delivered between 2012 and 2015 under a project management framework that will be overseen by the Library Service Management Team. The key elements of the Strategy
  - Rationalising management support
  - Expanding the use of volunteers
  - Continuing to exploit existing and new opportunities to generate income
  - Working collaboratively with other service providers and community groups to reach target customers
  - Working collaboratively with developers and businesses to address changes in population
  - Continuing to work with other library authorities to contribute to and benefit from best practice
  - Improving and extending digital library services
  - All libraries will remain open and
    - have a good book stock, public access computers and online resources
    - have self-service as standard
    - offer a broad range of services relevant to that local community
    - work closely with the community and stakeholders
    - encourage the use of library buildings as community spaceshave been incorporated into the Library Service Plan for 2012-2015 and linked to our Service priorities as specific objectives or cross cutting themes.

## SSC6

### **Rationalising management support**

4. Between January and April this year the Library Service underwent a significant restructure of its management, professional and support services staffing. The new Library Service Management Team is working successfully to deliver change leadership and the Service is benefitting from excellent support provided by the Organisational Development Team within HR.
5. The Service now has a structure that can equip and empower staff to take new and different approaches to ways of working in our delivery of a customer focused service that supports Library Service and Corporate priorities. The restructure was completed with full effect from May 1<sup>st</sup> and has led staff to embrace a culture shift and work more closely with colleagues within the Library Service, with colleagues across directorates and with external partners and other service providers. Staff are settling well into the new structure and are developing service wide new ways of working with enthusiasm.
6. Our Summer Reading Challenge this year was the first opportunity to work in this way. Library Managers and Librarians have worked across team boundaries to deliver the traditional Summer Reading Challenge for children and young people across the County and to offer an additional, new reading challenge to families and adults from Oxford Central Library, which means this is open to everyone as Oxford Central Library is used by residents from across the whole County. The Reading Challenge and its associated fun activities raise the profile of reading, encouraging the reading habit to support attainment, aspiration and achievement and contribute to the agenda of Every Oxfordshire Child a Good Reader. Activities have been led by Librarians, Library Managers and volunteers and also delivered in partnership with Friends Groups, the Story Museum and Oxfordshire Skills and Learning Service. Readers have enjoyed a wide range of fun reading development activities. Oxford Central Library has offered Bring and Share for adults, Puppet Making and Story for families and Attention Grabbers Graffiti Boards for all ages to pass on their favourite opening lines from books. Wantage Library hosted a Pyjama Party, Chinnor Library worked with Oxford University Museum and invited children along to the library to create their own stories and Bampton Library held activities around the storylab theme with families experimenting with words and ideas to create a story together. Celebration events to mark the achievements of participants will be held across the County and our Summer Reading Challenges at Oxford Central Library will culminate in a celebration event for adults with folk musicians entertaining the library audience and a medal and certificate ceremony for children accompanied by the Hurdy Gurdy Man.

### **Expanding the use of volunteers**

7. Volunteers currently and traditionally have supported the work of the Library Service by helping their local communities and adding value to

## SSC6

existing library services, acting as Computer Buddies, Home Library Service helpers and rhymetime helpers and leaders. This year the Service has worked closely with partners and individuals to create summer volunteering opportunities for young people to act as champions for the Summer Reading Challenge supporting and encouraging children to join in and enjoy reading activities throughout the summer holiday. This is a mutually beneficial new way of working for us, giving us an opportunity to involve and learn from young people and giving young adults an opportunity to add to their experience, develop their skills and have a good time.

8. The Library Service plan 2012-2015 will look to expand and develop volunteering opportunities that will respond to the decision taken by Cabinet around Community and Community Plus libraries.
9. As was always the intention, the three year process to develop our community library model began in earnest from April and conversations are now taking place between local groups and the Library Service – with some positive meetings so far - about the practicalities of working together.
10. The Library Service Manager has started to meet with Friends Groups to begin the process of moving towards a shift in the balance of staffing in Community and Community Plus libraries by April 2015. Solutions will be different in each case and worked out on a library by library basis, reflecting local need and local circumstances and be very much by negotiation and in partnership.
11. It is important to stress that it was never intended that the shift in the balance of staffing in these libraries would have been implemented by this stage in the three year process. The speed at which this work will progress will be governed by local factors. Some communities have existing Friends Groups who will work with us to support the delivery of their local library service; some communities have existing Friends Groups who may prefer to retain their traditional remit but will facilitate engagement with the community for us to develop a group who may; and in some communities there are no existing Friends Groups so we will be starting to work with stakeholders to begin the process of community involvement in the delivery of library services. However, there is now good progress with work around such issues as: what the role of the volunteer could entail; the practicalities of and needs for training; and what compacts and agreements between the Service and the Community could look like – all with input from the community groups involved.

### **Income generation**

12. Work will continue to review existing and new opportunities to generate income and the Service is currently looking to introduce the facility of payment by card for library customers, which will deliver choice for our customers.

## SSC6

### **Working to deliver facilities and buildings that meet changing local need**

13. Work planned to deliver our service priority of library buildings and environments that are customer facing, fit for the 21st century, safe and perceived as a valuable community asset is being implemented.
- The County Council is engaged with partners to look at locality development planning for Abingdon, Banbury, Berinsfield, Bicester and Didcot which may bring opportunities to improve library provisions
  - The Service is working with Friends Groups, community groups, service providers and partner agencies to maximise the use of community buildings and encourage their development as community spaces
  - The Service is working through the transition to our new facilities management provider and with the Corporate Landlord to ensure that library buildings are attractive, fit for purpose and safe
14. Following the decision to have self-service provision as standard across all libraries in the County, the Library Service has implemented a roll out programme due to complete in Spring 2013. The implementation of self-service enables individuals to manage their own library transactions and will be a vital tool that volunteers can use to assist library customers. Library customers are still able to choose the traditional, counter service but the track record of self-service in our libraries so far shows: high customer satisfaction; faster transaction time; customer privacy; more efficient stock management and a contribution to the delivery of a high quality and efficient library service fit for the 21st century. The roll out of this phase of implementation has already included libraries at Grove, Wychwood, Hook Norton, Carterton, Blackbird Leys and Chipping Norton where the installations have been welcomed by both library customers and staff. We were also able to undertake significant refurbishment work at Chipping Norton to deliver a greatly improved library environment which has been needed for some time.

### **Development of the digital library services**

15. Delivery of the service plan 2012-2015 will ensure that more people access online library services by improving and enhancing our web content, online services and electronic communication channels and that more people are supported and equipped to participate in the digital society.
16. Our eBook lending service was launched in February 2012 and has been well received with 3581 issues to date. It is interesting to note that the majority of our ebook customers come to the digital platform directly via the OCC website and not via other routes. Our full eAudio service is planned to come on stream this Autumn. This is an important development as it is a core service for visually impaired customers and those unable to access printed media.



## SSC6

17. We are currently working with the Early Intervention Service and sit on the OXME steering group to help develop the Boombox and Oxcentric websites. These are Oxfordshire's websites for young people; Boombox for children aged 8 to 12 and Oxcentric for 13 to 19 year olds and are designed as reliable sources of information about local services, news and projects for young people. Helping young people to access library services is a key function of both websites, giving them an accessible portal to the Library Service's online services. Helping young people to find volunteering opportunities is a recent addition to the websites, linking to the Library's Summer Reading Challenge project this year. Importantly, this work has involved young people and modifications to the sites are being made as a result of their contribution.

### **Collaborative working**

18. Collaborative and partnership working with community groups, other service providers and other library authorities to reach target customers, to deliver services more effectively and to contribute to and benefit from best practice are cross cutting themes throughout all Library Service planning and delivery.

19. We are working with partners to support the skills and employment agenda.

- We are lead partner for the Neithrop Job Club Project that will be delivered to engage unemployed young people and support them into work or training. This is a new way of working for us, acting as lead partner rather than in our more traditional role of support. The project will run for 12 months starting in the Summer and arose from our participation in existing Job Club initiatives and the multi agency Back to Work group chaired by JCPlus and is a recognition of the contribution the Library Service can make to achieving this agenda
- Oxford Central Library and other libraries across the county host advice sessions provided by the National Careers Service for job seekers

20. Our activity to deliver against our Service priority to promote books and the value of reading contributes to raising educational attainment and initiatives are often developed and delivered in partnership.

- We will be working with other directorates, Children's Centres, schools, Early Intervention Hubs and colleagues in the Oxford Skills and Learning Service to support the Every Oxfordshire Child a Good Reader initiative and with other library authorities to deliver the national Universal Reading Offer in Oxfordshire
- We are continuing to deliver a mobile children's centre facility under service level agreement with CEF Directorate

21. Our activities to deliver the national libraries Health Offer will contribute to the Health and Wellbeing agendas, building on our successful partner initiatives such as Unwind Your Mind, Books on Prescription and Get into Reading.

## SSC6

- The Quiet Volume: Monday 1 to Saturday 20 October. Oxford Central Library working with the Oxford Playhouse will be host venue for one of their PlaysOut productions. Promoted by the Playhouse as "an intimate and perfectly formed show for two, which exposes the strange magic at the heart of the reading experience", this is a new way of working for the Library Service and is moving on from other collaborations with arts organisations that will bring benefit to all partners
- The Library Service will work with the Arts Council to apply for funding through its Grants for the Arts programme to deliver initiatives designed to attract people to arts and cultural activity through libraries. A funding imperative is that libraries work in partnership with artists, arts organisations and cultural bodies. Grants will be available from September

22. As the Service moves forward to deliver the Library Service Strategy we will continue to develop existing collaborations and to work with new partners across Oxfordshire to position the Service as a cost-effective, high quality customer focused service, able to contribute to the delivery of corporate priorities as a key delivery partner.

Contact Officer: Jillian Southwell, Library Service Manager  
01865 810203

**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

## SSC8

- 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 resilience<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 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.**

David Etheridge  
Chief Fire Officer

Background papers: Attached as Annexes

Contact Officer: Peter Cleary  
August 2012

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## OXFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

### SAFER BY DESIGN

“**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.

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
- c) Travelling in confidence – a strategy for those on the move
- d) Working in confidence – a strategy for business.

#### Growing in Confidence

Activity	Outcome (Output) sought	OFRS Commitment
<b>Early Intervention Service (EIS) (hubs) –</b> supporting CEF	<i>To link a watch/station to each of the OCC proposed locality hubs for Early Intervention Services, with the aim of encouraging improvement in educational outcomes and breaking the cycle of deprivation.</i>	<b>OFRS will adopt all seven hubs and support them by offering a minimum of two learning events per year – which can be developed as the range of associated services increases.</b>  The hubs are located at: <b>Abingdon</b> – The Net, Stratton Way <b>Banbury</b> – Banbury Youth centre Hilton road <b>Bicester</b> – Courtyard Youth arts centre, Launton road <b>Didcot</b> – The Vibe, Park road <b>East Oxford</b> – Union Street

		<p><b>Oxford Littlemore</b> – Oxford Academy campus Sandy Lane  <b>Witney</b> – (interim) Unit 8 Thorney Leys.</p> <p>Work is underway with hub managers and the Early Intervention Service (EIS) to deliver tailored practical courses targeted to those who will gain most from this activity.</p>
<b>Fire Cadets</b> – supporting CEF	<p><i>To deliver weekly events for young people following a fire-based curriculum (currently five units in operation across county).</i></p>	<p><b><i>Although these schemes are well received in the current areas, OFRS may need to move resources into targeting more vulnerable communities and individuals.</i></b></p> <p>OFRS currently operate 5 Fire Cadet Units, and there is potential to increase the number of units, subject to financial and political support. The Fire Cadet Units have a separate cost centre and remuneration is paid for Cadets instructors.</p> <p>As well as the link to main stream schools, these units are now also linked to the EIS Hub managers to attract a wider ranging audience.</p> <p>In addition our Fire Cadets now have the opportunity to enrol in the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award scheme.</p>
	<p><i>To support OCC looked-after young people, with the aim of encouraging improvement in educational outcomes, our corporate parenting responsibilities and breaking the cycle of deprivation.</i></p>	<p><b><i>OFRS will examine opportunities to offer a cadet place for every looked-after young person in localities where they operate.</i></b></p> <p><b>Children Looked After Update</b></p> <p>Following detailed investigations, OFRS are unable to guarantee a Cadet place for every looked after child at Cadet units but currently exploring the options (as above)</p>



		for inclusion in the EIS Phoenix style courses which will include and open up opportunities for children looked after (CLA).
<b>Mentoring</b> (Looked-After Young People) - supporting CEF	<i>To increase confidence and improve prospects for OCC looked-after young people, with the aim of encouraging improvement in educational outcomes, our corporate parenting responsibilities and breaking the cycle of deprivation.</i>	<b>OFRS will offer every looked-after young person (Year 11- 12) the opportunity to have a Service Mentor.</b>  OFRS has an existing internal mentoring system in place and to develop and widen this further will need to identify a suitable number of skilled personnel at different levels, who are willing to act as external mentors.
<b>Reading Schemes</b> - supporting CEF	<i>To provide positive role modelling and interaction with young children, with the aim of encouraging improvement in educational outcomes and breaking the cycle of deprivation.</i>	<b>OFRS will pilot in partnership with CEF and local schools targeted reading schemes to improve literacy and confidence.</b>  Fire Service Staff working with CEF have delivered pilot schemes within the “every child a good reader” programme using the OFRS “Drago the Dragon” series of publications
<b>Phoenix courses</b> - supporting CEF	<i>To provide a minimum of 12 courses per year run in conjunction with OCC Early Intervention Service (EIS), with the aim of encouraging improvement in educational attainment outcomes and breaking the cycle of deprivation.</i>	<b>OFRS will continue to work with disadvantaged young people to help develop their confidence, discipline and team-working skills.</b>  The Phoenix Project is a successful collaborative partnership between the OFRS Risk Reduction Team and the OCC Early Intervention Service.  It involves staff from both areas working together with children who will benefit from additional support to discourage them from engaging in anti-social behaviour. The project provides an opportunity for young people to obtain an insight into the work of the Fire and Rescue

		<p>Service through an intensive week of educational sessions in Fire Prevention and Road Safety, combined with practical hose and ladder training drills similar to those undertaken by fire fighters.</p> <p>The scheme currently operates on a monthly basis and is delivered at selected Fire Stations. Each course runs for 5 days and on average caters for ten 11-14 year olds who use equipment provided by OFRS.</p> <p>During 2011, whilst the EIS was being fully established, the collaborative project delivered 4 courses, providing education for a total of 41 students, which were conducted at Deddington x 2, Eynsham and Goring Fire Stations.</p> <p>At the completion of each week long course the students take part in a pass out “drill”, where they have the opportunity to demonstrate the practical skills they have acquired to invited parents and guardians and is followed by the presentation of a certificate of attendance.</p> <p>Adaption of this programme is being considered to assist ‘children looked after’ to form relationships, build trust and provide a positive role model. Further explorations with CEF are also in place to deliver a ‘phoenix style’ course to children from troubled families.</p>
<p><b>Oxfordshire Business Education Alliance (OBEA)</b> – supporting CEF</p>	<p><i>To provide support to the 6 schools who form the alliance, with the aim of encouraging improvement in educational attainment outcomes and future opportunities through acquired skills.</i></p>	<p><b><i>OFRS continues to work with the alliance and the schools young people, helping to develop their confidence, discipline and team-working skills.</i></b></p>

<b>Takeover days -</b> supporting CEF	<i>To increase awareness for young people of the activities in the Fire and Rescue Service.</i>	<b>OFRS continue to support OCC Takeover Days on an annual basis.</b>
<b>Junior Citizens Trust –</b> OFRS lead partner supporting CEF	<i>To assist in the delivery of Junior Citizens Trust events to around 5000 KS2 children (Yr6) each year.</i>	<p><b>OFRS will maintain the current levels of support for the Junior Citizens Trust programme, where children across Oxfordshire benefit from attending multi-agency, multi-scenario educational health &amp; safety skills events.</b></p> <p>OCC provide the corporate trustee role to the Junior Citizens Trust (JCT) The JCT is made up from a number of partner agencies with OFRS acting as the lead partner. OFRS provides the Safety Centre for 65 days per year and will continue to provide resources to assist in delivery and form an active part of the JCT management committee.</p> <p>The Junior Citizens Trust mission statement is “to provide education to children and young persons who are residents of the County of Oxfordshire on a wide range of health and safety issues”.</p> <p>The Junior Citizens Trust operates at the Franklin Vermeulen Safety Centre, which forms part of the Rewley Road Fire Station in Oxford.</p>
<b>Franklin – Vermeulen Safety Centre –</b> supporting communities and other agencies	<i>To support OCC in providing a safer Oxfordshire through Fire Prevention and Community Safety education.</i>	<p>The Safety centre is managed by the Risk Reduction team and OFRS will continue to deliver, explore and expand the use of the Franklin-Vermeulen Safety Centre for use by :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adults with learning disabilities</li> <li>• SHIFA Trust (Banbury Black and Minority Ethnic groups)</li> <li>• Other community Groups including groups working within the drugs and alcohol, domestic violence and</li> </ul>

		<p>antisocial behaviour fields.</p> <p>The safety centre provides a number of 'scenario rooms' where participants can practically explore and identify hazards and risks within a safe and controlled environment. The educational scenario rooms are staged and set up as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• home safety</li><li>• fire safety</li><li>• railway safety</li><li>• road safety</li><li>• water safety</li><li>• personal protective safety</li><li>• Internet safety.</li></ul> <p>These scenarios and are operated by a mixture of volunteers and staff. Over 5000 children attend the Junior Citizen programme each year.</p>
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WORKING DRAFT

## Living in Confidence

Activity	Outcome (Output) sought	OFRS Commitment
<b>Empowerment, Self-help and taking own Responsibilities for Fire Prevention</b> – supporting OCC and the Oxfordshire economy	<i>To help and encourage the county's residents to take a degree of responsibility for the own safety from fire and manage family safety in their homes.</i>	<p><b>OFRS will continue to encourage all of the county's residents to take responsibility for their own safety through effective Fire Prevention and Safety messages using a variety of communication media and the 365alive initiative as the promotional banner.</b></p> <p>OFRS will continue to develop communication methods via many different strategies. The 365alive website will be widely used, with residents encouraged to visit this in the first instance. An electronic self-help Home Fire Risk Check (HFRC) form has been provided, which allows residents to complete their own HFRC and be provided with a result outcome, plus direction to areas which may require further review. <a href="#">365alive</a></p>
<b>Fire Investigation and Arson Reduction</b> – supporting OCC and the Oxfordshire economy	<i>To investigate all fires and support the Police in their endeavours of bringing to justice those who commit crime using fire as a tool, thus making Oxfordshire a fire safer county.</i>	<p><b>OFRS will continue to investigate all fires and report to the Police those suspected to be crime related</b></p> <p>A jointly funded specialist liaison officer is employed to ensure collaborative opportunities are exploited. Funding is provided by Royal Berkshire and Buckinghamshire FRSs and the Thames Valley Police (TVP). The role focuses on fire related crime and is regulated by a memorandum of understanding reflecting the joint requirements of all those involved.</p>
Major Incidents / Events - effective planning and preparation (including partnership working and co-ordination of category	To continuously improve in the preparation and response activities of the Local Resilience Forum partners, in relation to major incidents/events.	<p><b>As both a key emergency service – and the organisation responsible for managing emergency planning for OCC – OFRS will take regular opportunities to exercise its response arrangements for major incidents, so that can maintain and improve its performance.</b></p>

1 & 2 responders under the Civil Contingencies Act) - <b>supporting E &amp; E, SCS and CEF, as well as District, Town &amp; Parish Councils</b>		Extensive work has been undertaken both prior and during the Olympic period which will have long term benefits.
Business and Community Continuity Planning – recovery planning for major incidents - <b>supporting E &amp; E, SCS and CEF, as well as District, Town and Parish Councils</b>	To continuously improve in the support and guidance to local businesses and communities – to help them mitigate the effects of future major incidents / events, such as snow or flooding.	<b><i>As both a key emergency service – and the organisation responsible for managing emergency planning for OCC – OFRS will take regular opportunities to support and exercise local community and business continuity plans.</i></b>
<b>Data Sharing - supporting SCS and CEF</b>	<i>To reduce fires and accidents in and around the home (helping to break the cycle of deprivation), as well as promote safeguarding of citizens (including vulnerable children and adults), by implementing effective data sharing protocols with OCC Social and Community Services (SCS) (including Trading Standards).</i>	<b><i>OFRS will continue to target the safety of citizens (including vulnerable people) across the county - by working with its partners to establish integrated and proactive intervention programmes using their shared information.</i></b>  Targeted home fire risk assessments are being undertaken on a daily basis using information supplied by partners.
<b>Future Promotion of Improvements in Public Health</b> - supporting SCS and CEF	<i>To help improve the overall public health outcomes of the people of Oxfordshire, taking into account the potential transfer of this responsibility to local government in 2013.</i>	<b><i>OFRS will offer its support and locality-based resources to work with OCC and its partners in the promotion and implementation of healthy living initiatives across the county.</i></b>

<p><b>Supporting Crime Reduction Initiatives-</b> supporting County &amp; District Safer &amp; Stronger Partnerships – as well as, Neighbouring Action Groups and OCC Trading Standards</p>	<p><i>To help reduce the levels of crime and anti-social behaviour across the county.</i></p>	<p><b><i>OFRS will continue to support and help develop the work of local Safer &amp; Stronger Partnerships, by tasking its District Fire Risk Managers and Locality-based Retained Support Officers to proactively look for opportunities to use their resources to benefit these wider community safety areas.</i></b></p>
		<p><b><i>OFRS will signpost potential issues to the relevant authorities, as part of its regular community engagement work (such as doorstep crime, working with Trading Standards).</i></b></p>
		<p><b><i>OCC Non School Premises - Joint Inspection Scheme HSW Team / OFRS</i></b></p> <p>To ensure the effective and efficient delivery of scarce resources, OFRS have entered into a joint inspection scheme with the HSW of the OCC. This will enable inspection Officers of the OFRS to act as the “eyes and ears” for HSW in relation to Health, Safety and Welfare matters and for HSW Officers to act as the “eyes and ears” for OFRS in relation to Fire Safety matters. This scheme is similar to the existing Care Homes Joint Inspection Scheme.</p>
		<p><b><i>Care Homes - Joint Inspection Scheme SCS / OFRS</i></b></p> <p>To ensure the effective and efficient delivery of scarce resources, OFRS have entered into a joint inspection scheme with the SCS of the OCC. This will enable inspection Officers of the OFRS to act as the “eyes and ears” for SCS in relation to Health, Safety and associated matters and for SCS Officers to act as the “eyes and ears” for OFRS in relation to Fire Safety matters. This scheme is similar to the existing Oxfordshire’s Smarter Inspection Scheme.</p>

<b>Life Skills for adults with learning difficulties</b> – supporting CEF and SCS	<i>To help adults with learning difficulties live independently.</i>	<b>OFRS will provide tailored courses at our Life Skills Centre focussed on adults with learning difficulties.</b>  OFRS has on-going development and engagement with these groups to expand their use at the safety centre in Oxford
<b>Life Skills for young parents</b> – supporting CEF	<i>To help young/new parents manage family safety in their homes.</i>	<b>OFRS will provide tailored courses at our Life Skills Centre focussed on home safety for young / new parents.</b>

### Working in Confidence

Activity	Outcome (Output) sought	OFRS Commitment
<b>Minimise the burden on new businesses</b> – supporting E & E, as well as District, Town & Parish Councils	<i>To support new and established SME businesses relating to their duties under the Fire Safety Order.</i>	<b>OFRS will provide advice on request to new and established SME businesses relating to their duties under the Fire Safety Order.</b>
<b>OCC Apprenticeships - supporting E &amp; E</b>	<i>To actively promote and develop apprenticeship opportunities within our workforce, the community and our supply chain.</i>	<b>OFRS will support the county council's commitment to increase the opportunities for apprenticeships within its organisation.</b>
<b>Promote the benefits to local businesses by supporting the Retained Duty System</b> - supporting E & E, as well as District, Town & Parish Councils	<i>To develop the safety culture of local businesses by benefitting from the transferable skills of staff who are also Retained Duty System firefighters.</i>	<b>OFRS will continue to develop relationships with local businesses, highlighting the wider safety benefits of supporting staff to become Retained Duty System firefighters.</b>



## Travelling in Confidence

Activity	Outcome (Output) sought	OFRS Commitment
<p><b>Integrate the OCC Road Safety Education Team into OFRS - supporting E &amp; E</b></p>	<p><i>To continue to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on Oxfordshire's roads.</i></p>	<p><b><i>OFRS will help to develop a new delivery programme of road safety education that is focused not only on pre-school and school aged children but also new drivers, older motorists and motorcyclists.</i></b></p> <p>The Road Safety Team transferred to OFRS in April 2011 and consists of 3 x Road Safety Officers (RSO's) Child Footsteps, Cycle examining staff and a network of volunteers (over 1000 parents and teachers) to provide support to Fire Risk areas for a wide range of road safety education.</p> <p>The road safety programme provides a catalogue of 'off the shelf options' for solutions based on area and locality needs.</p> <p>The priority focus for road safety education will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Car occupants</li> <li>• Male drivers (17-24)</li> <li>• Motorcyclists</li> <li>• Drinking and drugs</li> <li>• Pedestrians (Children – Footsteps)</li> <li>• Cyclists (children)</li> <li>• Speeding.</li> </ul> <p>Integration with E&amp;E road safety engineers will continue as they provide current and historic trend analysis on road traffic collisions and are designing new road schemes and surfaces which are part of overall road safety measures.</p>
<p><b>Provide resources to help</b></p>	<p><i>To assist in the prioritisation of</i></p>	<p><b><i>OFRS will help to develop a system where locality-based</i></b></p>

<b>'Signpost' Highways defects (e.g. pot holes)</b> - supporting E & E	<i>highways defects and, as a consequence, reduce both their repair time and the potential risk of vehicle damage and/or injury to the public.</i>	<b>staff can effectively signpost defects (such as potholes, damaged road furniture, blocked drains) to the relevant OCC Area Stewards.</b>
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## ITEM 9

**SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE****3 SEPTEMBER 2012****Briefing on the Consumer Credit Market and High Risk Lending Practices****Report by the Director of Social and Community Services****Introduction**

1. This paper provides an overview of the legal controls concerning the provision of consumer credit and the recent changes to the consumer credit market place. It also identifies the involvement that the County Council has with consumer credit through the Trading Standards Service.
2. The officer that leads on consumer credit related activity for the Trading Standards Service will attend the committee meeting to present this report. The committee are invited to consider the report and comment on the Trading Standards Service involvement in this market.

**Statutory Framework**

3. The UK consumer credit market is regulated by the Consumer Credit Act 1974. The Act creates a licensing regime operated by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) and contains detailed requirements for:
  - Defining types of credit and hire.
  - Entering into business (including advertising, creditworthiness and affordability checks and pre-contractual information).
  - Protections for consumers in certain types of agreement for breaches of contract.
  - Annual statements and information to be provided by lenders to customers.
  - Termination and default in credit agreements.
  - Civil protections for consumers in cases of unfair relationships between lenders and borrowers.
4. The majority of the provisions of the Act are civil with no criminal sanction for any breaches that arise. The two main criminal sanctions that apply to the market are:
  - unlicensed trading (known as loansharking), and
  - breaches of the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Practices Regulations (the general consumer protection legislation that replaced the Trade Descriptions Act 2008 and criminalises unfair business practices).

## Licensing

5. In 2008 the OFT changed the consumer credit licensing regime. Licenses are now issued for the lifetime of a business (they previously lasted for five years and then required renewal). A new test of fitness to obtain and hold a licence was introduced at this time. An assessment of the prospective licensee's competence forms part of this fitness test as do previous convictions and any history of previous unfair business practices.
6. There are 11 categories of credit licence, for example "consumer credit business" and "credit brokerage". The OFT divide these business types into high risk and low risk. High risk businesses include:
  - Debt collectors (only those dealing with "regulated" credit debts).
  - Fee charging debt management companies.
  - Home lenders.
  - Secured lenders in the sub-prime market.
  - Credit reference agencies.
  - Payday lenders.
  - Pawn brokers.
  - Rent to buy lenders.
7. These business should all receive a competence visit on behalf of the OFT before being given a credit licence. The OFT has limited enforcement capacity and has agreements with the regional trading standards groups (Oxfordshire is part of Trading Standards South East (TSSE) partnership) to enable trading standards staff to carry out these visits on behalf of the OFT.
8. Licenses which were valid at the time that the regime changed continue to be valid until they expire. Therefore, large numbers of existing credit businesses will not have been through the fitness test and will not do so until their licence is due for renewal.
9. Until now, Oxfordshire Trading Standards has not been asked to carry out any compliance visits prior to a business being granted a license. However, a visit has now been requested by the OFT to an Oxfordshire business and this visit is to be carried out in August 2012.
10. As well as the statutory requirements of the Act, the OFT has issued some detailed guidance on which fitness to hold a credit licence can be assessed and which can help in assessing whether a business is in breach of the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations. In particular there is guidance on-
  - Irresponsible Lending
  - Debt Collection
  - Debt management and credit repair
  - Credit brokerage
  - Advertising
11. The OFT has the power to refuse to grant a license, apply conditions to it, suspend it (soon to be an immediate power where there is an urgent need to

protect consumers) or revoke it. This July, the OFT stripped a Sunderland based business of its home credit licence after the trader failed to disclose criminal convictions. In March the OFT revoked the brokerage licence of one of the country's largest brokers after finding deceitful and oppressive business practices.

### **Developments in the credit market**

12. Since the 2008 changes and credit crunch, the consumer credit market has changed dramatically. For example, prior to 2008 there was a large market in selling secured consolidation loans in which consumers were encouraged to bundle all their unsecured debt (e.g. credit cards) into a single "manageable" loan, usually secured on their home. This kind of lending has almost disappeared.
13. Instead there has been a dramatic rise in "payday lending" which is short term and very high interest borrowing of small amounts (the average for one lender is £290) and pawnbroking appears to be on the rise again. A new market has also been created in commercial debt management where a commission is charged by a company for making repayment arrangements on behalf of debtors in difficulty with their creditors.

### **OFT market reviews**

14. The OFT has carried out 2 reviews to do with high risk credit activity and is now carrying out a third:
  - OFT Review of High Cost Credit (published June 2012)
  - OFT Debt Management Guidance Compliance Review (published September 2010)
  - OFT Review of Payday Lenders and Compliance with Irresponsible Lending Guidance (on-going, to be reported on by end of 2012)
15. The Review of High Cost Credit found that, in many ways, the markets work reasonably well but that there is an underlying problem with consumers' weakness in financial capability. The high cost lenders were found to fill a gap in the market not served by more mainstream lenders, the level of complaints was found to be low and there was evidence of forbearance with consumers in difficulties.
16. However, the poor levels of financial capability among consumers and the lack of alternative, mainstream sources of credit impeded competition, leading to higher prices for credit than seemed reasonable.
17. Oxfordshire Trading Standards has contributed two inspections to the on-going review of payday lenders.
18. Concerns which prompted the OFT's review of payday lenders include:
  - Marketing of high cost, short term loans for inappropriate purposes (e.g. holidays, home improvements, entertainment, saving or improving credit ratings).

## SSC9

- Failure to carry out affordability checks prior to providing payday loans.
- Rolling over payday loans so that they are no longer short term.
- Unfair treatment of defaulters in financial difficulties.
- Misuse of continuous payment authorities which allow consumer's bank accounts to be accessed numerous times without specific permission.

### The Oxfordshire Picture

19. It is difficult to get a clear view of the scale of problems in Oxfordshire with high risk credit for the following reasons:
- Many consumers do not see their issues as "criminal" and so do not report them to Trading Standards.
  - While Trading Standards ran a consumer advice service for the public until April 2012, we did not offer specialist debt advice and so many consumers seeking help will have gone to either commercial debt management companies, specialist debt advice charities, local advice agencies such as Citizens Advice Bureaux which do offer debt advice or Consumer Direct.
  - Trading Standards has never needed to identify levels of credit related matters reported to the service. Therefore, there is no easy way to retrieve records of all credit related matters over any given period.
20. Illegal money lending, or loansharking, is known to be a significant problem nationally and to be greatly under-reported. It targets the most economically vulnerable sectors of society. Oxfordshire is covered by the Department of Business Innovation and Skills funded Illegal Money Lending Team. This is a specialist area of enforcement and victim support that has been discussed by the committee before.
21. Oxfordshire Trading Standards Service hosts quarterly meetings of the locally based charitable debt advice agency group called The Oxfordshire Money Advice Group. It is clear from discussions at this group that problems with debt are on the increase in the County although, to our knowledge, the Group has not discussed whether these problems originate with high risk lenders in particular.

John Jackson  
Director of Social and Community Services

Background papers: none

Contact Officer: Richard Webb  
August 2012

**SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE****3 SEPTEMBER 2012****Briefing on Consumer Empowerment Partnership Pilot in  
Oxfordshire April 2012 - March 2013****Report by Director of Social and Community Services****Background**

1. This is a pilot project, funded by Citizens Advice (Cit A), in which Oxfordshire Trading Standards is a partner organisation. The funding has been provided to Oxford Citizens Advice Bureau.
2. In April 2012, Citizens Advice took on the government funded role of providing the National Consumer Advice Service (NCAS). Consumers are able to contact the service for self- help advice on resolving consumer/trader disputes. Potential criminal activity relating to traders is referred to Trading Standards Services by the NCAS.
3. In April 2013, Citizens Advice takes over the government funded role of consumer advocacy, education and empowerment from the Office of Fair Trading and Consumer Focus.
4. Cit A intends that local Consumer Empowerment Partnerships (CEPs) *"provide local leadership in consumer protection and empowerment, integrating information, advice, education and advocacy...networks of advice givers and campaigners working together to ensure that people can get advice and information, can access education programmes, can report and hear about scams, rogue traders and local issues and can participate in activities to tackle these issues"* (Citizens Advice External Briefing on Consumer empowerment Partnerships).
5. The Oxfordshire pilot is one of 6 large scale projects. A summary of its aims is:
  1. To create an effective partnership of all local advice and support organisations to:
    - a. Pool evidence and influence policy makes
    - b. Advocate for and represent consumers' interests locally
    - c. Ensure effective delivery of consumer education programmes
    - d. Support the providers of consumer advice and support services
  2. Campaign to raise consumer awareness of specific, locally relevant consumer problems and to educate consumers to protect themselves

## SSC10

3. Encourage and facilitate information sharing between advice agencies and Trading Standards to ensure the effective enforcement of consumer protection legislation
6. To this end an initial forum was held on 5 July at Graham Hill House, to which all the currently known local providers of consumer advice and support were invited.
7. An information sharing protocol between local Citizens Advice Bureaux and Trading Standards is being formulated. Once agreed and implemented it will allow a local Citizens Advice Bureau to pass on to Trading Standards information it receives from its clients which show incidences or patterns of consumer harm. It will address issues of data protection in sharing such information and will reassure staff and volunteers in the bureaux that their clients' confidentiality and interests will be protected when this intelligence is shared.
8. Two publicity/education campaigns will be conducted in the second half of the financial year, focussing on issues which the partners agree form the most serious local consumer harm.

### Conclusion

9. A representative of the CEP from one of the local Citizens Advice Bureaux has been asked to attend the September Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting to provide an overview of the project and answer questions on it.

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Background papers: none

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