

Audit and Governance Committee
Date: 27th November 2024

Community Safety Services
Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service
Fire & Rescue Service Statement of Assurance 2023/24

Report by Jo Bowcock, Deputy Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is RECOMMENDED to

1. Consider and approve the Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service Statement of Assurance 2023/24 for publication. This document is procedural and not recommending any policy decision, strategy or project involving major change.

Executive Summary

2. 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 Statement of Assurance confirms that we are demonstrating due regard to the requirements included in the framework and the expectations set out in the authorities' risk management plans.

Exempt Information

3. No areas of exemption requested. Content will be public facing and open to public scrutiny.

Purpose

4. Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority 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. The Chief Fire Officer and the Cabinet Member for Public Health, Inequalities and Community Safety ensure the Council meets its legal and operational responsibilities to provide an effective fire and rescue service for Oxfordshire's communities.
5. The Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service Statement of Assurance is published in line with statutory reporting requirements. It provides assurance against the four strategic areas of protection, prevention, response and people outlined in the Fire and Rescue Service Delivery Plan.
6. The Statement of Assurance supports principles of good governance by ensuring transparency, regular reporting and public accountability across the Services strategic priorities. Information has been presented with "readability" and engagement in mind and will be available online.
7. The Statement of Assurance signposts readers to further information to support understanding of the Directorates activities and performance. For example, the CSS Directorates Annual Report 2023/24 which includes a more detailed breakdown of the types and numbers of incidents fire crews attended. Both documents support assurance and good governance enabling elected members and communities to scrutinise how outcomes are being achieved efficiently, effectively and in accordance with statutory requirements.

Aligning with Oxfordshire County Council's Corporate Policies and Priorities

8. The Statement of Assurance is aligned directly to the Council's Vision, Values, Objectives and Strategic Priorities. The document highlights how Community Safety Services contribute in particular to the following strategic priorities:
- a. Taking action to address the climate emergency in the way we work
 - b. Tackling inequalities in Oxfordshire
 - c. Prioritising the health and wellbeing of residents through our prevention and response work
 - d. Supporting carers and the social care system through safeguarding referrals
 - e. Creating opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential through education, work experience and outreach programmes
 - f. Engaging with our communities to play our part in a vibrant and participatory local democracy.
 - g. Working with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit.

Financial Implications

9. There are no new or additional financial implications arising from the Statement of Assurance. The document forms part of the annual procedural reporting process.

Legal Implications

10. There are no new or additional legal implications arising from the Statement of Assurance. The document forms part of the annual procedural reporting process.

Staff Implications

11. There are no new or additional resourcing implications. The document forms part of the annual procedural reporting process.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

12. There are no additional equality and inclusion implications. The Community Safety Services Directorate aims to ensure all areas of service delivery are considered within a risk based framework targeting those most vulnerable from harm. The Statement of Assurance contains references to initiatives designed to develop inclusivity within the Community Safety Services Directorate. All policies, procedures and working practices are assessed against an Equality Impact assessment. The Statement of Assurance document has been produced with accessibility and readability in mind.

Sustainability Implications

13. There are no sustainability implications within this proposal. Consideration has been given to limit environmental impact from printing and the publication will be made available to the general public as an online publication.

Risk Management

14. Community Safety Services activities are managed through robust national and local risk assessment frameworks. These include utilising and aligning with National Fire Chiefs Council guidance and National Fire Standards to manage operational and strategic risks. The Service also maintains a Directorate risk register and acts as the local authorities lead agency in business continuity, resilience, and emergency planning. This report is not

recommending any policy decision, strategy or project that would impact on the existing risk management strategy.

Consultations

15. There were no specific consultation requirements to producing the Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service Statement of Assurance

Rob MacDougall
Director of Community Safety and Chief Fire Officer

Annex

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service Statement of Assurance 2023-2024

Background Papers

CSS Annual Report 2023/24

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, Statement of Assurance 2022/23

Other Documents

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service Community Risk Management Plan 2022-26

HMICFRS Inspection Report 2023-25: Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, Effectiveness efficiency and people.

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