Exempt Section under Access to Information Procedure Rules – Section 10.1 Category 4 Information relating to contemplated consultations and negotiations in connection with labour relations matters arising between the authority and employees and trade unions.

1. OFRS have invested significantly in the recruitment and retention of on-call employees. Despite this, on-call availability continues to decline in Oxfordshire, **with a 36% reduction in the number full-time equivalent (FTE) on-call firefighters over the last 10 years.** This change has seen fire engine availability become greater during the night when activity levels (including incidents) are at their lowest and then reduced during the day when emergency response demand and activity levels are higher.

2. **Across Oxfordshire for 2024/25, overall, on-call availability was 58% and closer to 20% during the day, continuing an ongoing decline in on-call appliance availability and negatively impacting response time performance. This often results in us having a far lower number of appliances available in the daytime, routinely down to twelve fire engines rather than the 34 that the service has in place, even with additional cover provided through overtime and additional support.**

3. Urban growth in Oxfordshire linked to the county's strengths as a global centre for science, technology, and higher education presents challenges to OFRS on the basis that population expansion will continue to create increased community risk in locations that are further way from our existing fire station locations. This will mean that there is a risk of our response times increasing over time unless we optimise our emergency response model.

4. OFRS is committed to achieving greater value for money and constantly looking for ways to use its funding differently to improve the services it delivers to the public. The review has identified that during the 2021, 2022 and 2023 calendar years, the service spent an average of **£344.5k** annually on additional staff payments for appliance availability. This equates to approximately 1.5% of the fire and rescue service's overall revenue budget which could be put to a different use in support of a more effective and efficient operating model.

5. The service has overspent its budget in recent years (£75k overspent in 2022/23, £857k in 2023/24 and £784k in 2024/25). With the service being forecasted to follow this trend for 2025/26 and likely going forwards, it is imperative that we identify options to deliver our services within budget. Additionally, in alignment with the National Spending Review in 2021 and 2024, fire and rescue services have strategically committed to enhancing wholetime firefighter productivity by 3% and achieving 2% non-pay efficiency savings (cashable or non-cashable) annually. This review therefore also presents an opportunity to identify cashable and non-cashable efficiencies to both manage the service's overspend and to enable reinvestment in other parts of the service to improve its services.

6. The consultation process will be fully aligned with the Gunning Principles[1].

Introduction and Background

7. As part of the Community Risk Management Plan 2022-2026[2], OFRS is dedicated to *"providing services that reduce the likelihood of harm to people and their environment; services that put our community first, ensure equality in our provision and achieve greater value for money".*

8. In 2022, a review was initiated to enable OFRS to continue to provide an effective, efficient and resilient service to the communities of Oxfordshire. The initial elements of the review were to analyse and implement changes at a policy and procedural level. This review was partly initiated following a long term and continuing decline in on-call appliance availability.

9. The aim of the Fire and Rescue Cover Review is to ensure that the service has the required number of resources at the right time and in the right location. This is with a view to mitigating risk and managing demand to provide the optimal safety for the communities of Oxfordshire and our employees. The review considered several modelling factors to support this aim, including:

- The health, wellbeing and safety of our employees
- Assured emergency response cover (i.e., how we can make better use of wholetime resources to ensure increased resilience)
- Consideration of both first and second fire engine response times
- Productivity, investment and financial impacts
- Matching our resources and staffing models to risk and demand
- Economic social value benefits
- New shift opportunities and benefits

10. In September 2024, OFRS commissioned ORH[3] (Operational Research in Health), an independent evidence-based consultancy company, to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the existing operational model. This collaboration helped create options that address the modelling factors and ensure efficient resource allocation.

Current Operating Model

11. The current OFRS operating model uses employees on both wholetime and on-call duty systems to fulfil its primary role of responding to emergency incidents.

12. Wholetime firefighters operate on a full-time contractual basis and provide an immediate response from stations.

[1] The Gunning Principles are four legal rules that ensure public consultations are fair and meaningful: they require that consultations happen early, provide enough information, allow adequate time, and that responses are genuinely considered.
[2] https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/fire-and-community-safety/oxfordshire-fire-and-rescue-service/community-risk-management-plan
[3] https://www.orhltd.com/sector/fire/

13. On-call firefighters are paid employees of the service, who live or work within five minutes of the fire station and are available to respond to various emergencies and support their communities through other activities. They maintain their everyday lives and jobs until their alerter sounds, at which point they assume their duties as firefighters.

14. OFRS has 34 fire engines, and 14 specialist vehicles based throughout the county to support with emergency response. Of the 34 fire engines, 27 are staffed by employees conditioned to the on-call duty system, and seven by wholetime employees (including those on day crewing shift systems – see par. 28).

15. The service borders six other fire and rescue services: Buckinghamshire, Royal Berkshire, Dorset and Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Services. Each neighbouring service offers mutual cross-border assistance when required.

16. The on-call duty system remains one of the most prevalent response models, with 48 out of the 52 UK fire and rescue services utilising this approach. This system ensures coverage for 90% of the UK's landmass. In Oxfordshire, of the 25 fire stations, 19 are solely staffed by the on-call duty system, with the remaining six having an on-call fire engine.

17. Nationally, the recruitment and retention of on-call firefighters is becoming increasingly challenging. Although OFRS has only experienced a 3% decrease in the number of on-call firefighters (headcount) from 2014 to 2024, there has been a much more significant decline in the hours provided by on-call personnel. Specifically, there has been a 36% reduction in the number of FTE on-call firefighters in Oxfordshire during the same period. This reduction is notably higher than the national level, which has seen a 26% FTE reduction in on-call firefighters.

18. The reduction in hours worked by on-call firefighters has adversely affected the daytime availability of on-call fire engines. Figure 1 illustrates the availability of fire engines before additional cover support ('Gartan[4]') and with additional cover support ('Vision[5]'). It demonstrates that on-call fire engine availability is significantly higher during nighttime hours when operational activity is at its lowest, and it decreases during daytime hours when the demand for fire engine services is at its peak. Overall on-call appliance availability in the daytime is declining over time as depicted in figure 2, with the 2020/21 increase attributable to the COVID lockdown that year. These figures exclude additional support provided through overtime etc. This often results in us having a far lower number of appliances available in the daytime, routinely down to twelve fire engines rather than the 34 that the service has in place, even with additional cover via overtime etc.

[4] Gartan software allows on-call personnel to manage their available hours, offering an up-to-date overview of staffing availability at each on-call station.
[5] Vision is the command-and-control software used by Thames Valley Fire Control to dispatch resources and manage incidents.

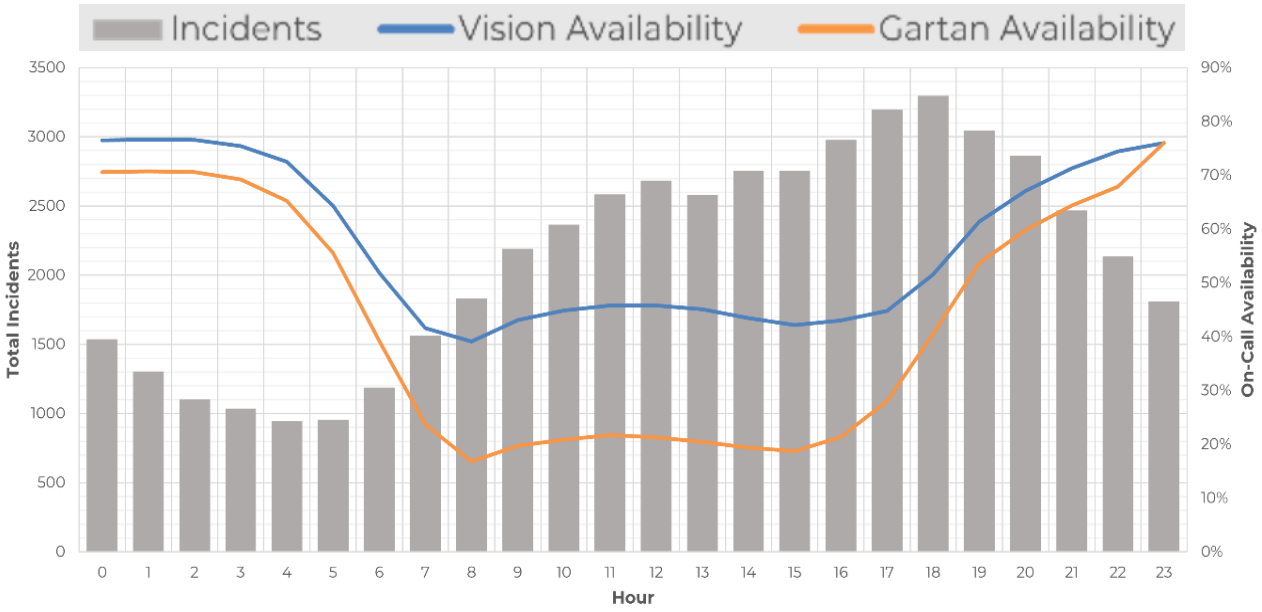

Figure 1 - OFRS Incident Demand and Fire Engine Availability by Hour

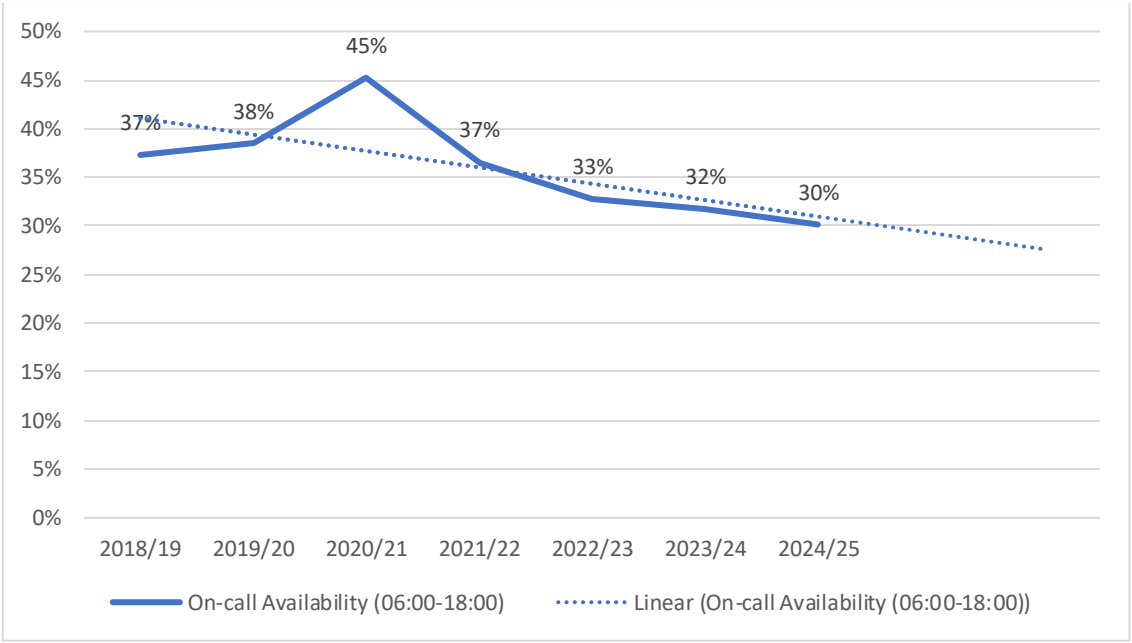

Figure 2 - On-call fire engine availability trend

19. During the day, the actual availability of on-call firefighters is down to 20%, negatively impacting response time performance over time as illustrated in figure 3 with response times to primary fires.

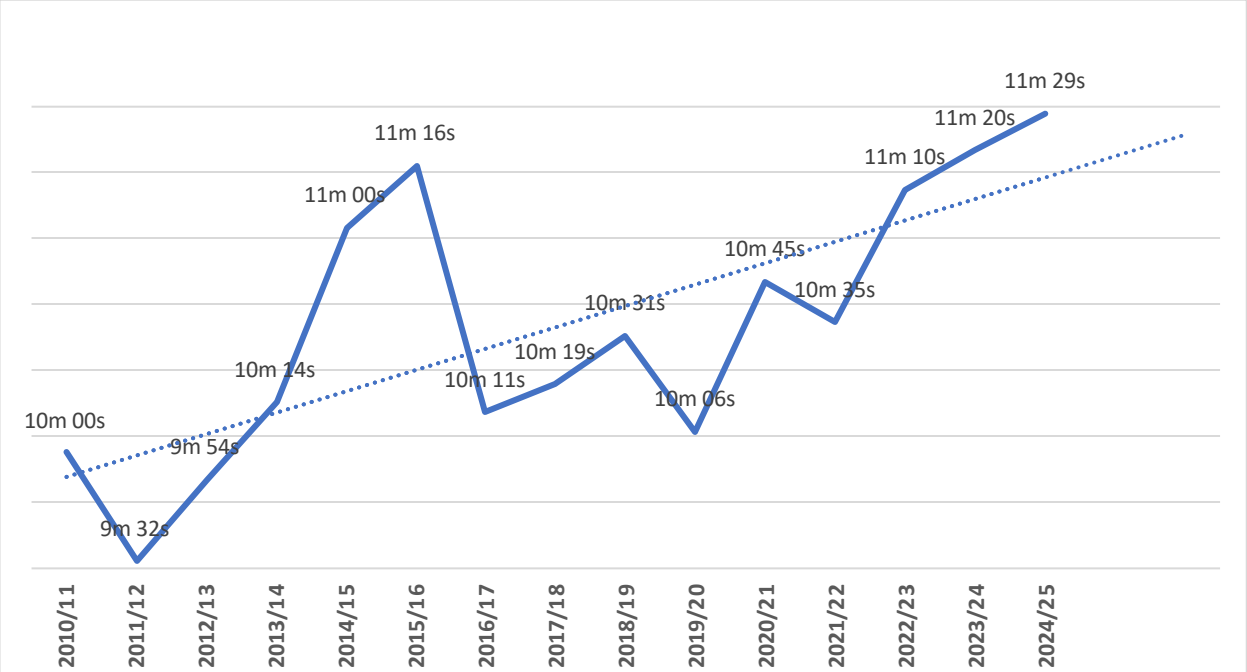

Figure 3 - OFRS response times trend to primary fires[6]

20. This is further supported by the HMICFRS, who as part of their 2023 State of Fire and Rescue report[7] stated that *"most services that they inspected were negatively affected by long-standing problems with availability of on-call staff, particularly during traditional office hours"* (p.29).

21. To manage risk effectively, including fluctuations in fire engine availability, OFRS reallocates resources such as wholetime employees or the second wholetime fire engine at Rewley Road across the county to address gaps caused by reduced on-call availability. If this is not possible or is not sufficient to address gaps in operational cover, additional cover is provided through overtime to ensure sufficient coverage. However, this method currently lacks efficiency and resilience, as the availability of employees able to work overtime cannot be guaranteed. The use of overtime also involves a huge organisational opportunity cost through people and systems being deployed to manage availability instead of other potentially more valuable work.

22. Figure 4 illustrates on-call availability before additional cover support ('Gartan') and with additional cover support ('Vision'). Most of the additional cover (an estimated 84%) at on-call stations takes place between 07:00 and 19:00hrs, which is also when emergency response demand is higher.

[6] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables#response-times
[7] https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/publications/state-of-fire-and-rescue-annual-assessment-2023/

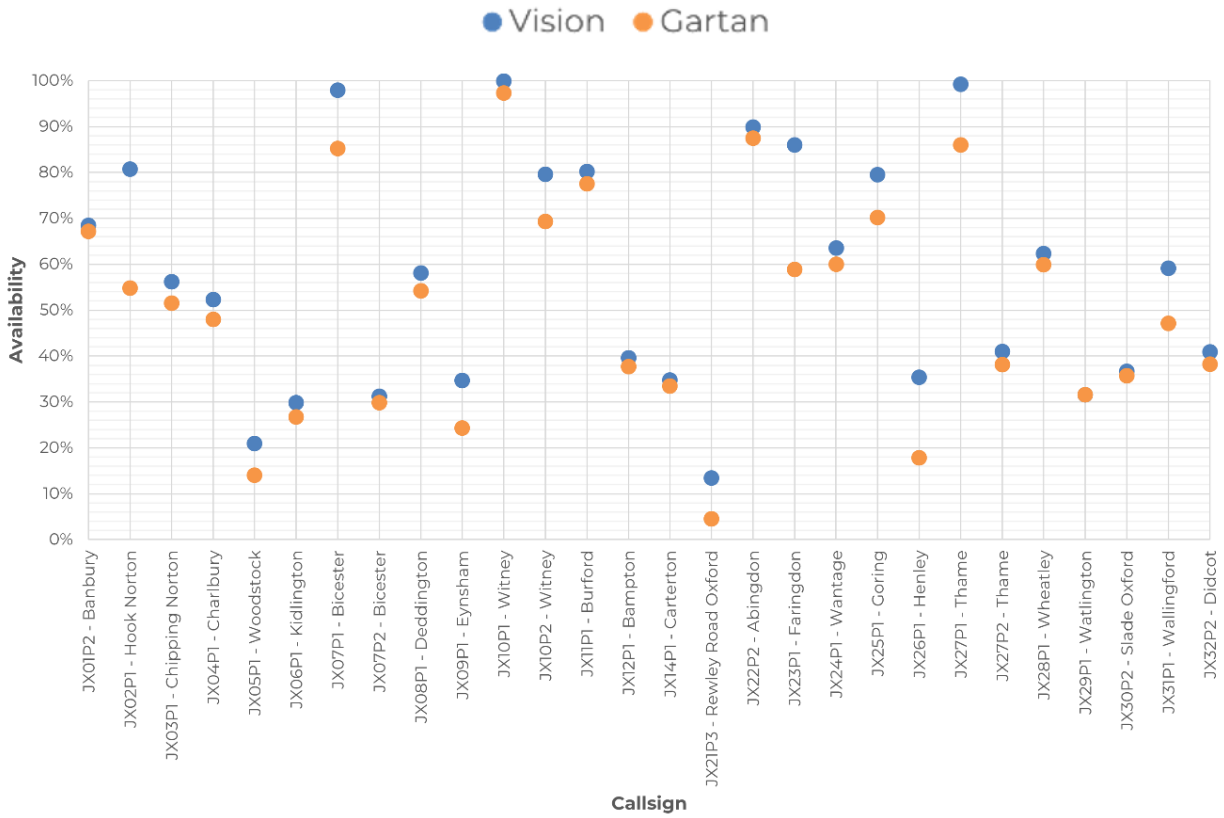

Figure 4: On-Call availability by fire engine

23. OFRS has two long-held emergency response standards which were reaffirmed by the Fire Authority in the latest Community Risk Management Plan[8] (CRMP). The standards are:

- 80% of incidents to be attended by a fire engine within 11 minutes
- 95% of incidents to be attended by a fire engine within 14 minutes

The performance against these standards is shared annually via the Fire and Rescue Annual Report.

24. The average response time for attendance at an emergency incident in Oxfordshire by a fire service vehicle is reported quarterly to the Cabinet and the public via the Business Management and Monitoring Report.

25. These response standards aim to provide a benchmark and recognise the distribution of OFRS resources throughout the county. However, on the basis that they include all incidents that we attend, they do not reflect the allocation of resources to manage relative risk. To ensure that the fire and rescue cover review focused on improving the response times to the highest risks (demand vs consequence), the service utilised four key incident response measures within the modelling that has been undertaken[9]. These are:

[8] https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/fire-and-community-safety/oxfordshire-fire-and-rescue-service/community-risk-management-plan
[9] Fire statistics definitions - GOV.UK

(a) Primary Fires

Potentially more serious fires that cause harm to people or damage to property. To be categorised as primary these fires must either:

- occur in a (non-derelict) building, vehicle or (some) outdoor structures
- involve fatalities, casualties or rescues
- be attended by 5 or more fire engines

(b) Dwelling Fires

Dwelling fires are a subset of primary fires and are fires in properties that are a place of residence that is, places occupied by households such as houses and flats, excluding hotels/hostels and residential institutions; dwellings also include non-permanent structures used solely as a dwelling, such as houseboats and caravans.

(c) Commercial Fires

Commercial fires are a subset of primary fires and are fires in other residential or non-residential buildings; other (institutional) residential buildings include properties such as hostels/hotels/B&Bs, nursing/care homes, student halls of residence; non-residential buildings include properties such as offices, shops, factories, warehouses, restaurants, public buildings, religious buildings.

(d) Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs)

Road Traffic collision are incidents that require the attendance of OFRS for collisions involving road vehicles, this includes large and small vehicles including motorbikes.

26. Each measure is evaluated by both service-wide response and district area response times. This assessment covers day, night, and overall impacts, as well as the average response times for the first and second fire engines. First fire engine response times are used to gauge the amount of time between a 999 call being made and when the public receive resources on scene to assist them in the emergency. Second fire engine response times are also important for community safety from a level of response perspective as multiple fire engines will be needed to resolve certain incidents. They tend to be used to gauge how quickly firefighters will receive support on scene and therefore are also about firefighter safety.

27. As previously mentioned, fire engine availability in the service is currently at its highest during periods of low demand and at its lowest during periods of high demand. Currently, the only virtually guaranteed fire cover consists of four wholetime 24 shift fire engines and three wholetime day-crewing fire engines. The reduction in on-call availability hours has an impact on response times. Due to limited on-call availability during periods of high demand, the service may not be able to provide consistent support for routine operations or for events that require substantial resources, such as severe weather occurrences or prolonged large-scale incidents.

28. OFRS maintains six wholetime stations[10] located in key urban areas of Oxfordshire. Three of these operate a 24-hour shift system known as '2-2-4' whereby employees are assigned to one of four watches, working a 42-hour week involving two ten-hour day shifts followed by two 14-hour night shifts. The stations operating this shift system are based in Oxford City (Rewley Road and Slade Park Fire Stations) and one in Banbury. Three wholetime stations, Abingdon, Didcot, and Kidlington, operate on a day-crewing system, which uses fewer employees than the 2-2-4 system. Wholetime employees at these day-crewing stations are provided with housing that enable them to respond to the fire station during the night to provide a 24/7 virtually guaranteed resource. This wholetime fire station framework provides resilient wholetime assets extending through the centre of Oxfordshire from north to south (see figure 3).

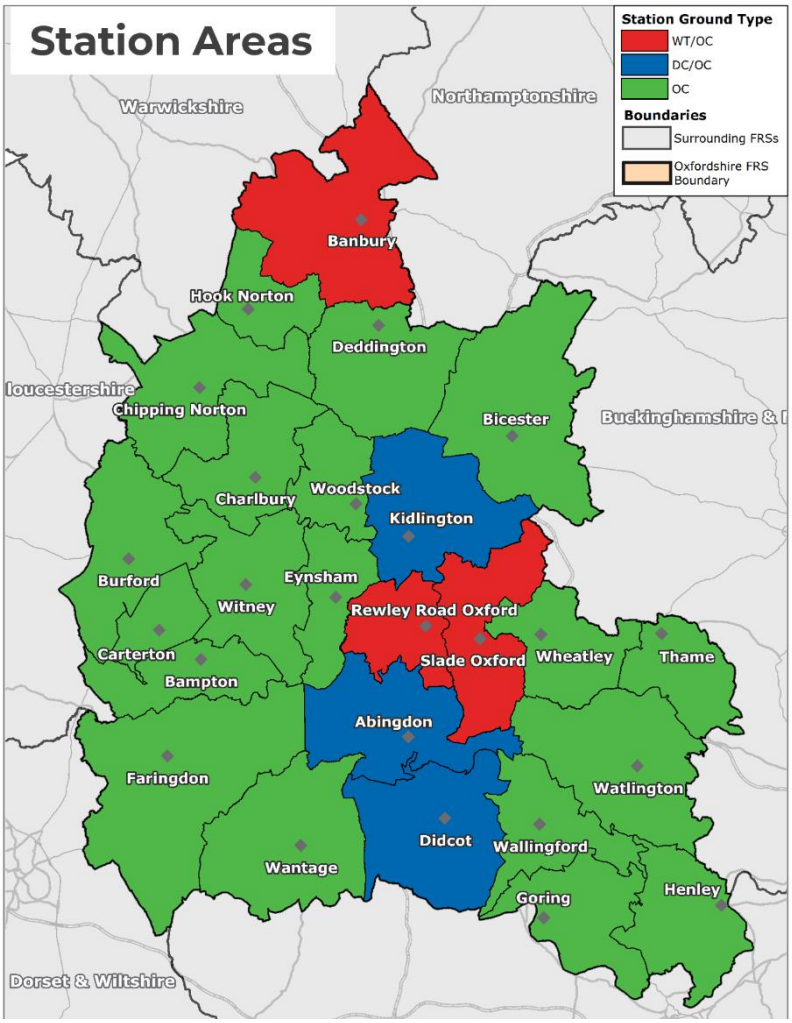

Figure 4 - Map of Oxfordshire fire station existing crewing models

29. The wholetime 2-2-4 shift system at Banbury, Rewley Road, and Slade Park currently operates the following shifts:

(a) Two 10-hour day shifts commencing at 08:15hrs and concluding at 18:15hrs.
(b) Two 14-hour night shifts commencing at 18:15hrs and concluding at 08:15hrs.

[10] All wholetime stations also have on-call crews to provide additional resilience.

(c) These stations also have an additional fire engine crewed by firefighters on the on-call duty system.

30. The wholetime day-crewing shift system at Abingdon, Didcot and Kidlington, provide 24/7 availability via a 12-hour day shift rota (including standby hours) supplemented with a 12 hour on-call rota that is performed by those wholetime employees. Abingdon and Didcot also have an additional fire engine crewed by firefighters on the on-call duty system. Kidlington has a crew of on-call firefighters that dual crew the fire engine with the wholetime firefighters.

31. To assist on-call stations with staffing, recruitment, training, and prevention and protection activities, OFRS assigns wholetime watch managers (eight personnel), referred to as Station Support Officers (SSOs), to groups of on-call stations. Additionally, there are three crew managers who act as Regional Support Managers (RSMs) whose main responsibility is to ensure on-call availability and, if necessary, staff on-call fire engines.

Financial Drivers for Change

32. Whilst the primary driver for this review is the long-term decline in on-call availability and increasing response times, the service is also committed to achieving greater value for money including constantly looking for ways to use its funding differently to improve the services it provides to the public.

33. Preliminary work as part of this review identified that between during the 2021, 2022 and 2023 calendar years, the service spent an average of **£344.5k** annually on additional staff payments for appliance availability across all the service's duty systems and stations. This equates to approximately 1.5% of the fire and rescue service's overall revenue budget which could be put to a different use in support of a more effective and efficient operating model.

34. The service has overspent its budget in recent years (£75k overspent in 2022/23, £857k in 2023/24 and £784k in 2024/25). With the service being forecasted to follow this trend for 2025/26 and likely going forwards, it is imperative that we identify options to deliver our services within budget. This review therefore presents an opportunity to also identify cashable efficiencies to reduce that overspend.

35. Additionally, in alignment with the National Spending Review in 2021 and 2024, fire services have strategically committed to enhancing wholetime firefighter productivity by 3% and achieving 2% non-pay efficiency savings (cashable or non-cashable) annually. This review therefore also presents an opportunity to identify non-cashable efficiencies that could be reinvested within the service in the support of more effective services.

Urban Growth

36. Strong population and economic growth linked to Oxfordshire's status as a leading global centre for science, technology, and higher education is driving urban growth in the county. The region is experiencing significant investment and development in key areas like the Oxford-Cambridge growth corridor. However, whilst Oxford city itself has seen slower population growth, population growth in surrounding rural districts is greater, partly driven by the planning constraints that limit development in Oxford.

37. Over the next decade, population and housing growth in Oxfordshire will be concentrated in several key areas, and in part to meet unmet housing needs from Oxford city. This presents challenges to OFRS on the basis that this growth will continue to create increased community risk in locations that are further way from our existing fire station locations. This will mean that there is a risk of our response times increasing over time unless we optimise our emergency response model.

Community safety work capacity

38. The service is currently restricted in its ability to deliver community safety work, particularly in Oxfordshire's rural and lower population density urban communities. Whilst the primary aim of the review was to identify proposals for a new emergency response model, it was considered that the review could also provide an opportunity to improve the service's capacity to deliver community safety work, such as prevention/protection activities as well as to assist with the management of operational risk information which supports our emergency response activity.

Additional Background Information

39. The options set out in this paper propose changes to the way in which some fire engines are crewed using a set of key principles which are as follows:

- The reallocation of full-time (wholetime) firefighters at nighttime to their deployment during the daytime at various stations to provide more resilient daytime fire engine availability and to improve firefighter productivity during the day in activities such as prevention work.
- Increased reliance on on-call firefighters at night when their availability is very good.
- Achieving more equal emergency response performance between high-density urban areas and low-density rural areas to ensure consistent daytime fire engine coverage and improved response times in both lower population urban and rural communities.

40. New shift opportunities will increase daytime capacity for enhanced prevention initiatives through safe and well visits, safety campaigns such as road safety and water safety, school engagements, and support for partnership events. Additionally, it will promote business fire safety benefits by providing opportunities to assist with the regulation of buildings to which the Fire Safety Order 2005 applies

and improve our capacity to collect risk information about premises which is a requirement of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004[11].

41. The Fire and Rescue Cover Model Review encompasses a review of the structure and budget associated with the operational fire station establishment, comprising uniformed OFRS employees who operate at Firefighter, Crew Manager and Watch Manager level and are on the National Joint Council (NJC) scheme of conditions and are eligible for membership of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme.

OPTIONS FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

42. OFRS is proposing eight options for public consultation. It should be emphasised that these recommendations are largely independent of each other and can be implemented separately. However, option 1 is the core option on to which all subsequent options are layers. All response performance data for subsequent options therefore include option 1 as well. A summary table comparing the options is provided in the **Appendix**appendix.

43. The financial consequences of these options are documented here and then summarised within the 'Financial Implications' section of this paper.

Option 1(a & b)

44. **Option 1(a) – The implementation of five 12-hour wholetime day shifts on current on-call stations (Core Option).**

45. **Option 1(b) - The implementation of five 12-hour wholetime day shifts on current on-call stations as per option 1(a) to include move of Wallingford Fire Station to Crowmarsh.**

46. These options would introduce the following changes:

(a) The implementation of a 12-hour wholetime day shift system at Chipping Norton, Faringdon and Wallingford (1a)/Crowmarsh(1b) to crew the fire engine during the day with the current on-call crews crewing the fire engine at night. This would enable local on-call crews to direct recruitment efforts toward covering nighttime hours.

(b) The implementation of a 12-hour wholetime day shift system at both Bicester and Witney to crew the first fire engine in the day with the current on-call crews crewing the second fire engine during the day and both fire engines at night.

47. OFRS current wholetime station establishment figure is 154 roles, ranging from Firefighter to Watch Manager. In addition to this, there are 11 Station Support Officers (SSOs) and Regional Support Managers (RSMs). To optimise the

[11] Section 7(2)(d) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires fire and rescue authorities to make arrangements for obtaining risk information.

distribution of wholetime fire engines, it is proposed to reassign the station/regional support roles and adjust staffing levels at existing wholetime stations.

48. It is proposed that the service changes its current station establishment from 28 to 24 personnel for stations on the 2-2-4 shift duty system and 14 to 12 personnel for the new day shift duty systems and Kidlington which is on the day-crewing system, with Abingdon and Didcot already at 12.

49. The modelling has demonstrated that reallocating employees from the second wholetime fire engine at Rewley Road and redistributing these employees to support the implementation of the 12-hour day shifts results in improved response times.

50. The proposed crewing changes would enable the service to reassign 57 employees to five 12-hour day shift stations.

51. Three additional full-time equivalent posts would be needed to supplement the existing 57 posts to support the station establishment proposals.

52. The reallocation of personnel from the second fire engine at Rewley Road would facilitate a reduction in the fire engine fleet. This adjustment would also result in the reduction of one wholetime fire engine during nighttime operations, thereby decreasing the number of wholetime assets from seven to six at night.

53. The service's Property and Emergency Response Strategy[12] has already set in motion a project to replace the fire station at Rewley Road with a smaller fire station with two appliance bays at the same location. The plan is expected to bring in **£22.4M** by selling part of the land at Rewley Road to developers. Building a new fire station on the site, along with a training centre at Grandpont is estimated to cost **£15.19M**.

54. However, the reduction in the fleet through a combination of this option and option 3 would enable a new fire station at Rewley Road to be designed to house one fire engine. An options appraisal has demonstrated that this would enable a training venue to be built on the existing Rewley site which would also facilitate the release of the Oxford Grandpont site, previously reallocated for the building of a fire and rescue service training facility, for alternative use. Currently, the build costs for this are estimated to be **£14.068M**. This option would also involve the hosting of the high reach appliance (hydraulic platform) at Slade Park Fire Station. A separate service review would be needed along with **£3.1 million** to cover the cost of changes at Slade Park Fire Station.

55. To facilitate the implementation of wholetime day shifts at the identified stations, it would be necessary to undertake property improvements. These improvements will ensure that the facilities meet the operational requirements and provide a suitable working environment for staff working full-time shifts.

[12] See 'Community Safety Services (CSS), Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service (OFRS), Property and Emergency Response Strategy', September 2023

56. **Benefits of option 1(a) and 1(b)**

(a) The trend of reducing hours worked by on-call firefighters primarily impacts daytime availability. This option would help to mitigate this issue with the five new 12-hour day shift fire engines providing a guaranteed 11 wholetime fire engines during the day, thus improving fire engine availability and response times during peak incident periods. The modelling shows an improved mean first response time to primary fires and RTCs by **1 minute and 46 seconds** during the day (08:00 – 20:00hrs) and by **1 second** at night. This change is also forecast to improve the mean second response time by **48 seconds** during the day.

(b) There would be a reduction in the costs associated with providing additional cover at on-call stations, with the biggest requirement for intervention being between 07:00 and 19:00 when it is estimated that 84% of all additional cover hours are provided.

(c) The change would provide greater parity in emergency response performance between higher population density urban areas and lower density rural areas with an improvement in lower density urban and rural response times. It is anticipated that greater parity in response times would also result in more parity with respect to incident outcomes (such as fire spread/damage in buildings) based on incident analysis conducted as part of this review. Currently, as the most densely populated area, Oxford City receives an overall mean response time of 8 minutes and 15 seconds for primary fires and RTCs, with the next quickest being Vale of White Horse with 12 minutes and 41 seconds, and the slowest being South Oxfordshire with 14 minutes and 8 seconds. Although, the change would have a slight adverse impact on the average Oxford City fire response time with an increase of 11 seconds overall, Oxford would still receive the fastest response time of the five local authority districts.

(d) Five new wholetime day shifts would enhance firefighter productivity by increasing the capacity during the day by 57 percent[13] for community activities, such as prevention, protection and risk information work, as well as other areas such as hydrant testing and inspection. These activities aim to improve safety for both firefighters and the community, reducing overall risk across the county.

(e) There would be workplace improvements and environmental benefits from the building of a new carbon efficient station in the Crowmarsh area, improving the county's building portfolio and reducing its carbon footprint.

(f) The reallocation of 46 employees from the traditional 2-2-4 shift system to a 12-hour day shift will provide more capacity in the daytime for productive community safety work.

(g) The reduction of a fire engine would result in annual maintenance efficiencies and remove the need for future fire engine and equipment replacement costs. The removal of the fire engine would result in a net reduction in the mileage

[13] 11 fire engines crewed by wholetime crews in the days compared to the current number of 7 wholetime crews.

undertaken by fire engines and therefore result in a reduction in fuel consumption and emissions/carbon footprint.

57. **Impacts of option 1(a) and 1(b)**

(a) There would be an additional revenue cost owing to three additional FTE posts being required and the increase in supervisory managers needed. There would also be capital costs associated with funding the necessary building improvements to enable the transition to day shift and for the building of a new Wallingford fire station in the Crowmarsh area.

(b) There is a potential for firefighters who only provide day cover to be made redundant from their on-call contract unless they can transition to an alternative nighttime contract or to an alternative on-call station.

(c) The change would see an increase to the mean second fire engine response time to primary fires and RTCs by **32 seconds** at night (20:00 - 08:00hrs).

(d) This option is forecast to slightly increase the response time in Oxford City with the first fire engine taking longer to get to primary fires and RTCs by **11 seconds** overall **(10 seconds in the day, 13 seconds at night)** and the second fire engine by between **2 minutes 1 second and 2 minutes 4 seconds.**

(e) If there are fewer people at each station, it means there is less flexibility when someone is off sick or on leave, so it is possible for crewing levels to drop below what is needed to keep fire engines available. This likelihood will be reduced by reviewing current policies that can impact on crewing levels including training days and leave allocation.

(f) The number of virtually guaranteed fire engine resources at night would decrease from seven to six but the remaining 27 fire engines would be staffed by on-call firefighters.

58. **Financial implications of options 1(a) and 1(b)**

(a) The establishment levels with respect to FTE posts is slightly higher overall for this option compared with the current response model with three additional FTE posts being required. The overall establishment revenue costs required for this new model are therefore greater. A significant factor in the scale of those increased establishment costs relate to the scope of the station-based watch manager roles and the resulting job evaluation and pay level. The minimum additional establishment revenue cost posed by this option are **£146.1k** with a maximum cost of **£267.1k**

(b) The creation of wholetime day shift stations in key locations across the county will result in a reduction in additional payments being made to operational employees to provide additional cover for additional pay[14]. It has been

[14] Different rates of pay are applied to additional cover hours depending on the terms and conditions that apply to the employee providing the cover.

estimated that potential pay-related revenue efficiencies of around **£305.4k per annum (£261.6k from wholetime salaries and £43.8k from on-call pay)** could be delivered. There would be additional savings from a reduction in daytime on-call cover payments, but these have not been assessed at this stage.

(c) This option reduces the total fire engine fleet by one which would deliver annual revenue efficiencies for the service's fleet replacement programme. It is estimated that this would result in an annual efficiency of around of **£31.6k**. Additionally, it would bring forward the sale of a fire engine from the fleet to deliver a one-off receipt of around **£10k**.

(d) Option 1(b) would require capital investment to deliver a new fire station at Crowmarsh and would be subject to being able to obtain a suitable site. Whilst an options appraisal has not been completed at this stage, it is estimated that the project would require capital investment of around **£7M**, offset by a capital receipt of around **£250k** for the current Wallingford Fire Station site.

(e) Capital investment to deliver day shift fire station property improvements estimated at around **£2M** would be required.

59. The reduction in fire engine fleet, together with option 3, means the new Rewley Road fire station can be built for one fire engine. This is expected to cost **£14.068M** with a potential change risk cost of **£305k**, which is **£0.8M less** than the previous building plan. The funding would come from the proposed sale of part of the land to developers for **£22.4M.**

Option 2

60. **The building of a new fire station towards the north of Oxford to combine Rewley Road and Kidlington fire stations, as well as the headquarters at Kidlington.**

61. This review has taken the opportunity to look at the decision that was made with respect to replacing the fire station at Rewley Road with a smaller fire station with two appliance bays at the same location (see par. 53). The feasibility of constructing a new fire station at Rewley Road in the area suggested by developers has always been conditional on the results of the Fire and Rescue Cover Model Review. Following the completion of the review, the model indicated that a new Oxford fire station could be established towards the north of Oxford, while still improving current response times.

62. This option would introduce the following changes:

(a) Release the whole of the Rewley Road site for sale and releasing a capital receipt.

(b) Release of the Oxford Grandpont site, previously reallocated for the building of a fire and rescue service training facility, for alternative use and benefit to the community.

(c) The building of a new fire station towards the north of Oxford that would house initially one 24/7 wholetime fire engine from the existing Rewley Road fire station. This station would also host the hydraulic platform which would require a separate internal review to consider further.

(d) Once the new station is built, the fire engine would transition from Kidlington fire station to the new station. This would provide a second fire engine that would be staffed by wholetime firefighters working a 12-hour shift in the day and on-call employees at night, with the on-call employees being transferred and permanently relocated from Kidlington Fire Station.

(e) The headquarters at the existing Kidlington Fire Station site would be moved to the new fire station. Some short-term retention of the storage and vehicle workshops areas at the rear of the current Kidlington site would likely need to be retained in the short to medium term as part of this transition with a medium-term capital receipt being released later.

63. **Benefits of option 2**

(a) Response times for the first fire engine arriving at primary fires and road traffic collisions during the day (08:00 to 20:00) are expected to get faster by **1 minute and 51 seconds** when this change is made, if option 1a or 1b is also followed.

(b) It is also forecast to provide a quicker fire engine response time at night with an improvement in first fire engine response of **21 seconds**. This change is also forecast to improve the mean second response time by **1 minute and 53 seconds** during the day when taken alongside option 1a or 1b.

(c) The consolidation of fire stations would offer significant environmental benefits through reducing the building portfolio, including the establishment of carbon-efficient facilities. This initiative would support the council's target of going beyond net zero with respect to carbon emissions.

(d) The zero-emission zone in Oxford aims to improve air quality, reduce carbon emissions, and promote zero emission travel. A new fire station towards the north of Oxford would reduce the need for employees to travel into central Oxford as well as reduce the need for more polluting fire engines from routinely driving in Oxford City centre, helping to improve air quality in Oxford.

(e) The transport links around the north of Oxford, including Oxford Parkway railway station, A34 and Oxford ring road links, would present opportunities for OFRS employees, external partners and other council employees.

(f) The Kidlington headquarters, fire station and associated day-crewing houses, as well as the full Rewley Road site could generate capital receipts that can be utilised to support OFRS and the council's wider property strategy.

(g) The removal of the need for day-crewing houses at Kidlington will result in revenue efficiencies for the county council, specifically associated with the maintenance of those properties. It will also free up capacity in the teams in OFRS and Property Services that support with the management and maintenance of the properties although this would be a marginal benefit with no opportunity to reduce the employee pay costs for those services.

64. **Impacts of option 2**

(a) The number of guaranteed fire engine resources at night would decrease from six to five due to the loss of day-crewing housing in Kidlington that presently enables one of the current fire engines to also be provided at night. The remaining 27 fire engines would be staffed by on-call firefighters.

(b) This option would slightly increase the average second fire engine response to primary fires and RTCs across Oxfordshire by **4 seconds** at night compared to the current response model. However, this would still be quicker than with the station being located at Rewley Road.

(c) This option is forecast to slightly increase the response time in Oxford City with the first fire engine taking longer to get to primary fires and RTCs by **48 seconds** overall **(47 seconds in the day, 51 seconds at night)** and the second fire engine by between **42 seconds and 1 minute 52 seconds**. However, it should be noted that the second fire engine response time is quicker in this option than in option 1a/1b.

(d) There is a potential that the service would need to find an alternative location for Rewley Road assets whilst transitioning to a new station which could have short-term impacts on emergency response times.

(e) This option would require us to transfer 14 wholetime employees to an alternative duty system and would require 12 of these employees to find alternative residential accommodation. However, in the event that this option was taken forward to implementation, a lengthy notice period would be provided.

(f) This operating model would create an opportunity to review the service's specialist rescue capabilities which are currently delivered via the rescue tender from Kidlington Fire Station. This would need to be reviewed through an in-service review with employee engagement.

65. **Financial implications of option 2**

(a) Recommendation 2 would result in the combination of two fire stations into one (Rewley Road and Kidlington into a single station). This should therefore reduce the overall cost of the building portfolio within OFRS.

(b) This recommendation would also result in capital receipts for the full Rewley Road site as well as for the Kidlington Headquarters site and the associated 14 day-crewing houses at Kidlington. Estimated capital receipts for these

sites are a total of **£31.6M of which £7.3M is already committed under the existing capital programme**. A new fire station towards the north of Oxford is estimated to represent a build cost **£25M plus one-off sale costs of £100k for Kidlington related buildings** with the land being pursued through a S106[15] agreement.

(c) Assuming that call-out costs would be distributed to firefighters on the on-call duty system, this recommendation would result in the removal of on-call retainer payments to employees on the wholetime duty system at Kidlington. This would result in annual revenue efficiencies of around **£40k** per annum.

(d) There would be annual reductions in the cost of maintaining the housing with the disposal of the housing at Kidlington. It is estimated that this would save around **£67.7k** per annum in maintenance and council tax costs.

(e) This recommendation might result in a need to remove the existing Specialist Rescue Team and the removal of the rescue tender from the fleet replacement programme. This might therefore require the service to redistribute the specialist rescue capabilities to other stations. The exact scope for achieving this has not yet been determined and the intention would be to co-design a new specialist rescue model with our employees. However, an estimated one-off upfront cost to achieve this has been estimated to be **£213.3k** with annual maintenance costs of **£16.7k**. These costs would be partially offset by efficiencies to the fleet replacement programme of an estimated **£37k** per annum (excluding direct and indirect annual maintenance costs) as well as operational equipment replacement and maintenance costs which have not been assessed at this stage. Additionally, it would bring forward the sale of the rescue tender from the fleet to deliver a one-off receipt of around **£10k**.

Option 3

66. **The removal of Rewley Road On-Call fire engine.**

67. The analysis identified that between July 2022 and March 2024, Rewley Road on-call provided less than five percent availability during the day and only nine percent availability at night. Based on these availability figures, removing this fire engine has no impact on the service-wide mean first and second response performance.

68. Over a five-year period, the Rewley Road on-call fire engine attended around 22 incidents a year. The removal of this fire engine is projected to have no significant impact to the service-wide mean first response time to primary fires and RTCs.

[15] Section 106 (S106) Agreements are legal agreements made between Local Authorities and developers under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The agreements are linked to planning permissions and can also be known as planning obligations.

69. **Benefits of option 3**

(a) The reduction of a fire engine would result in annual maintenance cost efficiencies and remove the need for future fire engine and equipment replacement costs. The removal of the on-call fire engine will result in a net reduction in the mileage undertaken by fire engines and therefore result in a reduction in fuel consumption and emissions/carbon footprint.

(b) This change will provide efficiencies through a reduction in costs associated with training, recruitment, occupational health, workwear and personal protective equipment. It will also create capacity to the teams that are involved in providing these functions.

70. **Impacts of option 3**

(a) Seven firefighters would be made redundant from their on-call contract unless they are able to transition to an alternative on-call station.

(b) There could be a perception that this would impact the response to Oxford City and Oxfordshire more widely. However, it should be noted, that owing to the ability to recruit and retain sufficient staffing, this fire engine has predominantly been unavailable to respond to emergency incidents.

71. **Financial implications of option 3**

(a) This option reduces the total fire engine fleet by one which would deliver annual revenue efficiencies for the service's fleet replacement programme. It is estimated that this would result in an annual saving of around **£31.6k**. Additionally, it would bring forward the sale of a fire engine from the fleet to deliver a one-off receipt of around **£10k**.

(b) This option would result in small reductions in the service's pay as well as associated costs (Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), workwear etc) amounting to an estimated **£56k** per annum.

(c) This option would involve some upfront one-off redundancy costs to be met which are estimated to be around **£13.4k**.

Option 4

72. **The removal of the second fire engine from Thame Fire Station.**

73. This option recommends the removal of the second fire engine from Thame Fire Station due to consistently low availability.

74. Over a five-year period, Thame's second fire engine attended on average 17 incidents a year in Oxfordshire (and 12 incidents in other counties). The removal of Thame's second fire engine is projected to have no significant impact to the service-wide mean first response time to primary fires and RTCs.

75. **Benefits of option 4**

(a) The reduction of a fire engine would result in annual maintenance cost efficiencies and remove the need for future fire engine and equipment replacement costs. The removal of the fire engine will result in a net reduction in the mileage undertaken by fire engines and therefore result in a reduction in fuel consumption and emissions/carbon footprint.

(b) The second fire engine's removal will allow the employees at Thame fire station to concentrate on staffing the first fire engine, helping to improve its availability.

(c) Given that the station is currently crewed for two fire engines, this change will mitigate the requirement for substantial investment in recruitment to continue the current staffing requirements and enable any such resources to be reallocated elsewhere.

76. **Impacts of option 4**

(a) The removal may affect morale, with some employees possibly deciding to leave the on-call service.

(b) Although there is no impact to the service wide mean first response time to primary fires and RTCs, there is an increase of **2 seconds** to the overall mean second response time.

77. **Financial impacts of option 4**

(a) This option reduces the total fire engine fleet by one which would deliver annual revenue efficiencies for the service's fleet replacement programme. It is estimated that this would result in an annual saving of around of **£31.6k**. Additionally, it would bring forward the sale of a fire engine from the fleet to deliver a one-off receipt of around **£10k**.

(b) This option would also reduce the long-term employee establishment need for the station, which would have a marginal impact on the staffing costs of the service along with a reduction in associated costs such as training, workwear and PPE. However, no compulsory redundancies would be required.

Option 5

78. **Additional investment in the number of firefighters to maintain an additional fire engine 24/7 for Oxford.**

79. Subject to additional investment, this option enables the service to maintain the current number of wholetime 24/7 fire engines. This would further improve the service response times and provide additional resilience in fire engine numbers available, particularly overnight.

80. As a minimum, 12 additional staff would be required. This investment would enable a new fire station towards the north of Oxford to have a guaranteed second wholetime asset at night.

81. The optimal investment would be a further 24 firefighters. The additional firefighters could be utilised at Slade Park fire station providing a second fire engine 24/7 (in addition to the existing fire engine that is crewed by firefighters on the on-call duty system) or, at a new station towards the north of Oxford, providing two 24/7 fire engines and one 12-hour day shift.

82. **Benefits of option 5**

(a) The mean response time for the first and second fire engine to dwelling fires and RTCs is projected to improve by **7 seconds** and **1 minute and 8 seconds**, respectively.

(b) It would provide additional fire engine resilience, as well as staffing resilience.

(c) The investment of additional firefighters will help with the staffing of the high reach appliance.

83. **Impact of option 5**

(a) There will be additional revenue costs associated with the investment of 12 or 24 additional firefighters.

(b) A greater establishment would feed into indirect costs elsewhere in the service such as with respect to recruitment and training.

84. **Financial impacts of option 5**

(a) A change in establishment for option 5 would result in a need for a mixture of more firefighter, crew manager and watch managers depending on whether the investment was for 12 or 24 additional roles and require additional revenue. The resulting additional revenue costs would also be dependent on whether the watch manager roles were subsequently job evaluated at watch manager A rates or watch manager B rates.

(b) The minimum additional revenue cost posed by the investment options would be **£670.5k** per annum and the maximum would be **£1.28M** per annum.

Option 6

85. **Additional investment in the number of firefighters to maintain watch employee establishments at current levels.**

(a) Subject to additional investment, this option enables the service to deliver option 1 without reducing watch establishments (see par. 48) and maintaining current establishments.

(b) As a minimum, 28 additional staff would be required.

86. **Benefits of option 6**

(a) Watches would be better able to manage the impacts of unplanned staff absence.

(b) There would be a reduced need to bring in extra staff to keep fire engines available, making the service more reliable overall and helping to keep overtime levels as low as possible.

87. **Impact of option 6**

(a) There will be additional revenue costs associated with the investment of at least 28 additional firefighters.

(b) A greater establishment would feed into indirect costs elsewhere in the service such as with respect to recruitment and training.

88. **Financial impacts of option 6**

(a) A change in establishment for option 6 would result in a need for more firefighter roles. The resulting additional revenue costs would be dependent on other supported options and whether watch manager roles were subsequently job evaluated at watch manager A rates or watch manager B rates.

(b) The minimum additional revenue cost posed by this investment option would be **£1.26M** per annum.

Option 7

89. **Additional investment in the establishment to retain nine station support officers (SSOs).**

(a) Subject to additional investment, this option enables the service to deliver option 1 without removing SSOs (see par. 48).

(b) As a minimum, funding for nine Watch Manager (B) posts would be required.

90. **Benefits of option 7**

(a) The provision of SSOs reduces the workloads that would otherwise be imposed on on-call managers, helping to reduce the burden placed on those part-time roles and thereby helping to maximise staff retention.

(b) SSOs should enable the efficient and effective management of fire stations, reducing the burden of station managers.

91. **Impact of option 7**

(a) There will be additional revenue costs associated with the investment of nine watch manager posts (WM(B) rates)

(b) A greater establishment would feed into indirect costs elsewhere in the service such as with respect to recruitment and training.

92. **Financial impacts of option 7**

(a) The additional revenue cost posed by this investment option would be **£621k** per annum.

Option 8

93. **The potential closure of three on-call fire stations**

94. The review has identified the potential for the closure of one, two, or three fire stations due to persistently low on-call availability. Such closure would have minimal impact on service-wide response performance. The three stations identified are Eynsham, Henley, and Woodstock stations.

95. **Eynsham Fire Station -** Between July 2022 and March 2024, Eynsham on-call provided 17 percent availability during the day and only 34 percent availability at night. Over a five-year period, Eynsham's fire engine attended around 51 incidents a year. The removal of Eynsham's fire station would result in a **1 second** increase in the service-wide first and second fire engine overall response time to primary fires and RTCs.

96. **Henley Fire Station -** Between July 2022 and March 2024, Henley on-call provided 9 percent availability during the day and 25 percent availability at night. Over a five-year period, Henley's fire engine attended on average 66 incidents a year in Oxfordshire. Removing Henley's fire station would increase the service-wide first fire engine response time to primary fires and RTCs by **2 seconds** overall. Second fire engine response times are forecast to increase across Oxfordshire **1 second** if this option were taken.

97. **Woodstock Fire Station -** Between July 2022 and March 2024, Woodstock on-call provided 5 percent availability during the day and 26 percent availability at night. Over a five-year period, Woodstock's fire engine attended around 11 incidents a year. Removing Woodstock's fire station would increase the service-wide first fire engine response time to primary fires and RTCs by **1 second** overall. Second fire engine response times are forecast to increase across Oxfordshire by **1 second** if this option were taken.

98. **Benefits of option 8**

(a) There will be several revenue saving opportunities.

(b) There will be potential capital receipts through the sale of sites.

(c) The reduction of one, two or three fire engines will result in annual maintenance cost efficiencies and mitigate the need for future purchases of new fire engines and equipment.

(d) Reducing the number of sites will bring environmental benefits, as well as helping to improve the council's carbon footprint.

99. **Impacts of option 8**

(a) This change if implemented will see the removal of either one, two or three fire engines. This will be a reduction in the number of fire engines that could be utilised during the periods that they are available.

(b) Challenges with selling the sites - Henley and Woodstock both have telecommunication equipment at each site mounted on the training towers for which the council receive a small income. Although there is a break clause, it cannot be actioned until 2029. Even with the break clause, the County Council is required to work with the operator for 18 months to try to find an on-site solution. If no solution can be found, they must vacate.

(c) This change, if implemented, would result in firefighters from the affected stations being made redundant from their on-call contract unless they are able to transition to an alternative on-call station.

100. **Financial impacts of option 8**

(a) The closure of fire stations would result in several revenue efficiencies, as well as some potential capital receipts if the fire stations/sites were sold. The following are categories of potential revenue efficiencies and costs that have been assessed as part of this paper:

- Headcount and pay savings
- Training efficiencies
- Fire engine and operational equipment replacement savings
- Property related savings
- PPE and uniform savings
- Redundancy costs

(b) It is estimated that the overall annual employee-related revenue efficiencies that could be delivered through the closure of Eynsham, Henley and Woodstock are **£241.7k**, **£165.8k** and **£171.5k** respectively.

(c) The council would be liable to meet one-off redundancy revenue costs associated for any member of staff that was unable to relocate to another fire station. These one-off costs have been estimated to be **£42.8k** for Eynsham, **£43.2k** for Henley and **£73.5k** for Woodstock.

(d) Option 8 would result in one or more fire stations being closed. It has been estimated by Property Services that the capital receipts generated, together with sale costs, for these three sites would be as per table 1.

(e) This option would reduce the total fire engine fleet by one, two or three vehicles which would deliver annual revenue efficiencies for the service's fleet replacement programme. It is estimated that this would result in an annual fleet saving of around of **£31.6k per station closure** together with one-off receipts of around **£10k** for the sale of each of those vehicles.

Table 1 - Estimated capital receipts for identified station closures

Station closure	Est. capital receipt	Sale Costs
Woodstock Fire Station	**£450k**	**£7k**
Eynsham	**£150k**	**£2k**
Henley	**£600k**	**£9k**

101. Table 2 summarises the financial implications of the options is provided.

Table 2 - Summary of revenue and capital financial implications ***(these numbers are indicative to support decision making around direction of travel)***

*Difference in cost relates to the type of Watch Manager A or B

Option	Capital One off costs/ (savings) £	Revenue One off costs/(savings) £	Revenue Annual Costs/ (Savings)£ Min *	Revenue Annual Costs/ (Savings) £ Max *
Previously approved property strategy for the redevelopment of Rewley Road Fire Station (Including Option 3)				
Current Rewley Road build	£14,068,000			
Rewley Road potential change risk	£305,000			
Sale of Rewley surplus land	(£22,400,000)			
Committed Rewley sales receipt (Including Fire Station improvement £3.1m)	£7,332,000			
Strategy Total	**(£695,000)**			
Option 1 - Implementation of a 12-Hour day shift				
Establishment costs			£146,100	£267,100
Reduced overtime costs			(£305,400)	(£305,400)
Reduced fleet costs		(£10,000)	(£31,600)	(£31,600)
Day shift fire station improvements	£2,000,000			
***Option 1 Total* Part A**	**£1,305,000**	**(£10,000)**	**(£190,900)**	**(£69,900)**
Options 1 Part B: Wallingford Fire Station move	£7,000,000	(£250,000)		
Option 1 Total	**£8,305,000**	**(£260,000)**	**(£190,900)**	**(£69,900)**
Option 2 - Building a new fire station towards north of Oxford combining Rewley Road & Kidlington Fire station/ Head Quarters				
New Rewley Road sale price	(£25,000,000)			
Kidlington HQ (Excluding Workshop)	(£2,000,000)	£30,000		
Kidlington Crew Housing	(£4,600,000)	£69,000		
Rewley Road potential change risk	£305,000			
New north Oxford station build	£25,000,000			
Revised specialist rescue model		£203,300	(£128,000)	(£128,000)

Temporary Rewley Road alternative location		TBC		
Option 2 Total – Standalone excluding Option 1a/b	**(£6,295,000)**	**£302,300**	**(£128,000)**	**(£128,000)**
Plus Total Option 1 Part A	**(£4,295,000)**	**£292,300**	**(£318,900)**	**(£197,900)**
Plus Total Option 1 Part A + Part B	**£2,705,000**	**£42,300**	**(£318,900)**	**(£197,900)**
Option 3 - Removal of Rewley Road On -Call fire engine				
Reduced fleet costs		(£10,000)	(£31,600)	(£31,600)
Reduced pay and associated employee costs			(£56,000)	(£56,000)
Redundancy costs		£13,400		
Option 3 Total	**£0**	**£3,400**	**(£87,600)**	**(£87,600)**
Option 4 - The removal of the second fire engine from Thame Fire Station				
Reduced fleet costs		(£10,000)	(£31,600)	(£31,600)
Option 4 Total	**£0**	**(£10,000)**	**(£31,600)**	**(£31,600)**
Option 5 - Additional investment in the number of firefighters to maintain an additional fire engine 24/7 for Oxford				
Establishment costs			£670,500	£1,280,000
Option Total	**£0**	**£0**	**£670,500**	**£1,280,000**
Option 6 - Additional investment in the number of firefighters to maintain watch employee establishments at current levels				
Establishment costs			£1,260,000	£1,260,000
Option Total	**£0**	**£0**	**£1,260,000**	**£1,260,000**
Option 7 – Additional investment in establishment to retain nine station support officers				
Establishment costs			**£621,000**	**£621,000**
Option Total	**£0**	**£0**	**£621,000**	**£621,000**

Option 8- The potential closure of three on-call fire stations				
Eynsham Fire Station	(£150,000)	£35,050	(£241,700)	(£241,700)
Henley Fire Station	(£600,000)	£42,200	(£165,800)	(£165,800)
Woodstock Fire Station	(£450,000)	£70,250	(£171,500)	(£171,500)
Consideration Total	**(£1,200,000)**	**£147,500**	**(£579,000)**	**(£579,000)**

Staff Consultation - New daytime shift changes

102. To implement the changes identified in the options section of this report, the service has evaluated complementary opportunities to improve the impacts of shift work. The review will therefore include consulting employees and trade union representatives on transitioning to a 12-hour day shift only pattern and aligning shift patterns to consistent start and finish times where possible. This decision is at the discretion of the Chief Fire Officer and will not form part of the public consultation process.

103. In accordance with the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, OFRS must assess the risks posed to employees by work activities. We are also required to commit to implementing measures that are 'reasonably practicable' to eliminate or manage these risks. This encompasses considerations such as the number of hours worked and the scheduling of these hours.

104. The Health and Safety Executive's guidance on 'Managing Shiftwork'[16] advises that shifts longer than 12 hours should be avoided. They note that alertness and performance can decline during extended shifts, potentially increasing the risk of errors and accidents.

105. The modelling analysis has identified that the time frame between 06:30 and 19:30hrs has the lowest fire engine availability. Therefore, implementing 12-hour day shifts would effectively ensure that the service covers most of this period.

106. Implementing 12-hour shifts would boost productivity and create opportunities to expand our prevention and protection initiatives.

107. Additionally, the creation of new day shift opportunities would offer watch-based employees the opportunity to work on a pattern that excludes night work.

108. In July 2023, the National Fire Chiefs Council released a commissioned report that assessed the economic and social value of the UK fire and rescue services[17]. The analysis indicated that, on average, targeted home visits ('Safe and Well') lead to a reduction in the occurrence of accidental dwelling fires. It was noted that the gross return on investment for such activities is £2.67 for every £1 spent.

109. The implementation of a new 12-hour day shift system, along with the adjustment of shift pattern start and finish times, may introduce challenges for employees, including potential effects on personal circumstances. These matters will be carefully discussed and considered through the employee engagement and consultation processes.

[16] https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg256.htm
[17] https://nfcc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/ESV-UK-Fire-and-Rescue-Services-all-nations-FINAL.docx

Corporate Policies and Priorities

110. As alluded to in other parts of this paper, whilst the proposals and considerations outlined are intended primarily to result in improvements in Fire and Rescue service delivery, wider benefits that align with the county's corporate priorities would also result.

111. **The climate emergency** - The reduction in fire engines coupled with the rationalising and improvement of the fire station building portfolio will result in net reductions in the council's carbon footprint.

112. **Inequalities** – The creation of day shift fire stations in some of the more rural areas would provide the fire and rescue service with resources to help drive community safety initiatives in these areas and potentially provide the council with resources to help deliver to initiatives to address social, economic, health and educational inequalities.

113. **Health and Wellbeing** - The creation of day shift fire stations in some of the more rural areas would provide the fire and rescue service with greater resources to deliver the service's 'Safe and Well' interventions, supporting the council's drive to improve our residents' physical and mental wellbeing.

Property Implications

114. The freehold ownership of all but one of the fire stations lies with the council. Subject to planning or any required permissions, the council can carry out works to fire stations. In some instances, there are other occupiers on the fire station sites by way of a sub-lease. If there are to be changes to the site, or a potential disposal, the correct notice will need to be served. These notices often come with prescribed timescales.

115. Some of the considerations and recommendations above include property works. The cost of these can fluctuate as the market for materials changes and can be affected by market factors outside of the council's control.

116. Similarly, some of the considerations and recommendations above include property disposals to generate capital receipt. The amount of capital receipt, whilst estimated above, is subject to the prevailing market conditions at the time of any disposal. These estimates should not be relied upon as definitive sums.

Comments checked by:
Henry White, Property Services, Operational Manager for Assets & Investment
henry.white@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

117. This paper presents recommendations and considerations that would fundamentally affect individuals and teams within the Fire and Rescue Service. At this stage, the changes are proposed and either recommended for public consultation or for consideration for public consultation. Any effects on employees resulting from the implementation of recommendations following public consultation will be reviewed separately and addressed at the appropriate time.

The service will involve all Fire and Rescue employees and representative bodies in public consultation on recommendations to cabinet, encouraging their full participation.

Comments checked by:

Caroline Bing, Strategic People Partner, caroline.bing@oxfordshire.gov.uk (HR & Cultural Change)

Equality & Inclusion Implications

118. A draft equality impact assessment (EIA) has been prepared and will remain a live document throughout the public consultation process.

119. At this stage, the EIA indicates that the options detailed in this paper would create greater parity in emergency response performance across the county with performance improving in more rural areas and a minor reduction within Oxford City. While this greater parity in response performance may reduce service for more deprived Oxford communities, it is expected to address current inequalities and benefit rural areas of Oxfordshire.

Risk Management

120. At this stage, there are five areas of risk that have been identified in relation to the options within this paper as follows:

    a. Damage to the service's and council's reputation by proposing changes that have a fundamental impact on the way in which fire and rescue services are delivered in Oxfordshire. The business case underpinning the need for change is strong and therefore it is suggested that a comprehensive public consultation would enable the service to clearly communicate the risks associated with the current emergency response model and demonstrate that a 'do nothing' option is not viable.

b. Any major change programme will clearly risk impacting the morale of employees and risk damaging industrial relations. OFRS has very positive industrial relations and it will be paramount that the service invests in early, honest and proactive engagement with employees and their trade union representatives to allay concerns by being open to concerns and new ideas. The need to communicate to employees that they can influence the outcome of any public consultation is an important aspect of any subsequent communications and engagement strategy.

c. The options for change would result in increased emergency response times in Oxford City and across Oxfordshire at night and therefore involves a potential marginal worsening of community safety with respect to emergency incident outcomes. However, the service is proposing changes according to independent third-party modelling to ensure that the appropriate resources are allocated to the correct locations at the right time, with the goal of enhancing community safety overall and it is argued that the improvements in daytime response, when demand is highest, outweigh any marginal increase in nighttime risk.

d. Reduced fire engine resilience at night through an increased reliance on on-call resources could result in fire engine availability challenges if on-call availability reduces at nighttime in the same way as we see it currently trending in the day. The on-call system is currently very reliable during nighttime periods, and it is intended that some of the options for change will allow some on-call stations to focus more on their nighttime availability, further improving nighttime resilience.

e. The ability to deliver the property strategy associated with the options for change detailed in this paper is a risk due to the potential availability of capital funding, the ability to locate, access and secure land for new buildings, and the ability to secure planning permission with respect to new buildings, or to maximise the capital receipts for sites released. However, the opportunity for changes to the council building portfolio are believed to be compelling and the potential to release capital receipts to fund building investment with an increased overall value for money return is felt to be strong mitigation.

Appendix – Summary Modelling Comparison Table

	Option 1(a)(Core)	Option 1(b)(Core)	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5	Option 6	Option 7	Option 8
Proposal	**12-hour wholetime day shifts on current on-call stations**	**Option 1(a) plus move Wallingford Fire Station to Crowmarsh**	**North of Oxford fire station to combine Rewley Road and Kidlington**	**Removal of Rewley Road On-Call fire engine**	**Removal of the second fire engine from Thame Fire Station**	**Investment to maintain an additional fire engine 24/7 for Oxford**	**Investment to maintain watch employee establishments at current levels**	**Investment to retain nine station support officers (SSOs)**	**Potential closure of three on-call fire stations**
Wholetime Stations Introduced	Day shift at: Chipping Norton, Bicester, Witney Faringdon & Wallingford	Day shift at: Crowmarsh	2-2-4 and day shift at North Oxford	None	None	None	None	None	None
New Stations	None	Crowmarsh	North Oxford	None	None	None	None	None	None
Station Closures, moves and combinations	None	(Move) Wallingford	(Combine) Rewley Road Kidlington	None	None	None	None	None	(Close) Woodstock Eynsham Henley
Number of Stations	25	25	24	25	25	25	25	25	22
Number of fire engines	34	34	32	33	33	34	34	34	31
Wholetime Staff Numbers	An increase of 3 FTE wholetime firefighters ↑		No change	No change	No change	An increase of 12 FTE wholetime firefighters ↑	An increase of 24 FTE wholetime firefighters ↑	An increase of 9 FTE wholetime firefighters ↑	No change
On-Call Staff Numbers	No change	No change	No change	2.8 FTE fewer on-call firefighters (7 total headcount)	No change	No change	No change	No change	17.4 FTE fewer on-call firefighters (26 total headcount)
Response time change (Overall)	1 minute and 11 seconds improvement ↑		11 seconds improvement ↑	No impact	No impact		No impact	No impact	4 seconds longer response time ↓
Response time change (Day)	1 minute and 46 seconds improvement ↑		5 seconds improvement ↑	No impact	No impact		No impact	No impact	1 second longer response time ↓
Response time change (Night)	1 second improvement ↑		20 second improvement ↑	No impact	No impact		No impact	No impact	3 seconds longer response time ↓
Change in Prevention, Protection and Response Activity	Industry and business engagement in rural areas will increase. More ‘Safe and Well’ and risk information visits conducted in rural areas.		No change	No change	No change	No change	No change	No change	Tolerable