Community wardens to enhance accident prevention in Oxfordshire

Personal vision of
Simon Furlong, Chief Fire Officer for Oxfordshire County Council

Saving 6,000 lives in Oxfordshire through prevention, protection and emergency response activities, over the next five-years and setting up new teams of community wardens are among the ambitions of Simon Furlong, Chief Fire Officer.

Simon is also Director of Community Safety Services for Oxfordshire County Council. It is in this role that he sets out his vision to make the county even safer for residents between 2019-2022.

Simon wants people at the heart of his plans. As a first step, he is encouraging residents' participation in a consultation to shape Oxfordshire County Council’s ‘Community Risk Management Action Plan (CRMP)’, part of its Thriving Communities initiative.

The action plan includes some impressive aspirations:

- To help 37,500 vulnerable children and adults to lead more secure and independent lives, supported by safe and well-being visits.
- To educate 85,000 children and young adults to be better informed to lead safe and healthy lives.
- To give 20,000 businesses advice and support to grow (provided by Oxfordshire County Council’s Trading Standards, fire protection and emergency planning officers).
- And to save 6,000 lives through prevention, protection and emergency response activities.

A personal vision

Simon shares his vision and explains why everyone has a role to play in achieving these ambitious plans:

“There are so many exciting opportunities at Oxfordshire County Council’s Fire and Rescue Service… not just fighting fires, but in preventing accidents in the first place,” explains Simon.

“That’s why I believe passionately in establishing Community Safety Advocates or Wardens. These individuals and teams will coordinate and conduct our prevention activities, delivered through our safe and well programme.
Diversity

“I want residents at the heart of such projects, as we strive to make a real difference to everyone’s safety and wellbeing. The wardens should, like our other fire and rescue roles, be representative of the local community. That’s why I am determined to increase the diversity of the operational workforce to reflect everyone who lives in Oxfordshire.

“For me, diversity covers many areas, such as gender, age, race and religion. If our personnel represent the community, we will better understand local issues. In turn, we’ll be able to enhance community relationships, break down barriers, and deliver the right messages at the right time, with the right outcome. For example, some faiths and religions use candles to celebrate key events. Knowing this means we can support with advice on fire safety.

‘Taster’ days

“To give an insight into what we do, Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service will be organising ‘taster’ days in coming months, offering people an opportunity to experience what it takes to be firefighter, or a member of our prevention team. Participants will be able to ask questions to those already in the service. The service is currently recruiting people to train as on-call firefighters. For further information, visit the website: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oncallfirefighters or email fire.recruitment@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Risk profiling

“Oxfordshire is growing, with significant increases in housing, infrastructure and commercial properties projected in coming years.

“We must plan and evolve to meet the resulting demand, making sure our resources are matched to serve these new and expanding communities. To achieve this, we will use our risk profiling model at a local level to identify the impact of changes on the environment, to understand what resources are needed – and where – to deliver our response, protection and prevention activities. Continuing to make the county a safe place to live and work will always be my number one priority.

Tenants’ safety

“My vision goes far beyond fire and rescue, particularly when it comes to protecting tenants from both physical harm and financial loss if renting a residential property.

“Oxfordshire County Council Trading Standards plans to work with partners to improve standards in the private rental sector. New legal requirements are expected to come into force, which should provide better protection for people in rental
properties, and our Trading Standards team intends to help businesses comply with the regulations.

“But, for those rogue businesses who choose not to meet standards and provide shoddy accommodation or rip off rental agreements, we’ll take enforcement action, where needed, to protect the safety and security of tenants.

**Young adults – safe and healthy**

“Our commitment to prevent accidents and make Oxfordshire a safer place for everyone was illustrated through two exciting initiatives last year:

“In November, 5,000 Oxfordshire sixth-formers and college students attended a special event to learn about the devastating impact of being involved in a car crash.

“Oxfordshire young drivers (aged 17-24) make up around one in eight drivers on the road, but are almost twice as likely to be involved in road traffic incidents that result in death or injury. This statistic spurred us into action. Further risk analysis will help target vulnerable young people, and adults, with relevant safety advice and support in coming months.

**Scooter safety**

“In another innovative trial, we organised a driver training scheme for mobility scooter users in Wantage. It was about raising awareness of the issues users face – pavement obstructions, and judging when safe to proceed on pedestrian crossings – and improving their driving skills.

“I hope we’ll have sufficient interest to replicate the scheme in other parts of the county. It’s a great example of my team’s forward thinking; identifying vulnerable groups and developing bespoke programmes to improve their wellbeing.

“So, this is my vision. An Oxfordshire where residents feel safe and secure. A fair and affordable Oxfordshire for those who rent. And a representative Fire and Rescue Service, where lives are saved and prevention advice given by a team who reflects the community makeup. Residents are at the heart of these plans. I want everyone in my team to be passionate about making a positive difference; to help Oxfordshire thrive.”

**Oxfordshire County Council is encouraging everyone to have their say by commenting on all parts of Simon’s vision, set-out in its draft ‘Community Risk Management Action Plan (CRMP)’.

The consultation runs until 01 February 2019:

**Online:**
https://consultations.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consult.ti/CRMP2019DRAFT/consultation-lo
me

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Or in writing:

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