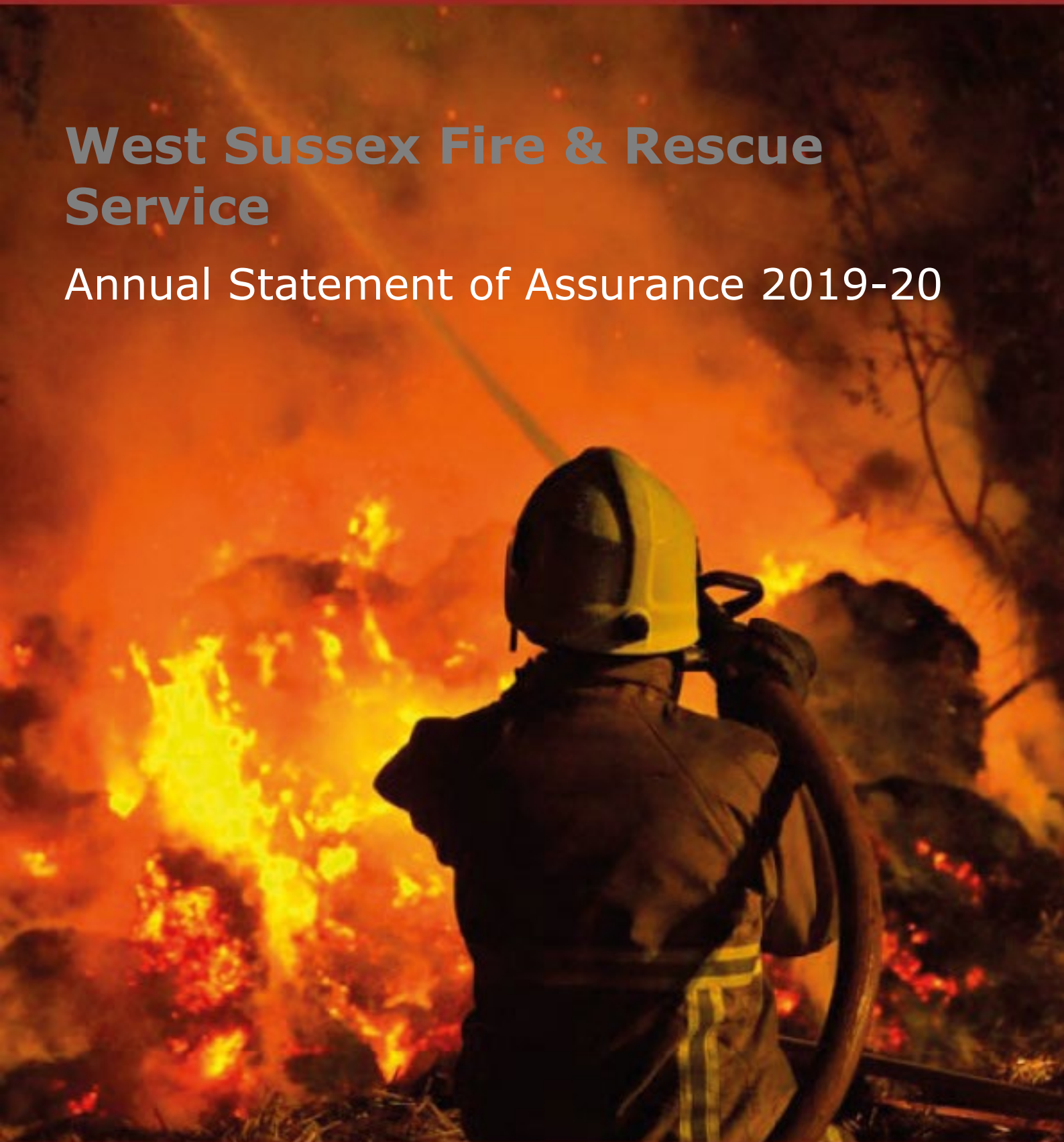


West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service

Annual Statement of Assurance 2019-20



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Foreword

Welcome to West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service's (WSFRS) Annual Statement of Assurance.

This Statement details the financial, governance and operational arrangements that were in place for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. The Statement is produced in accordance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework 'Guidance on Statements of Assurance for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England.'

I am proud of the fire and rescue service we provide and of the people who work so hard to keep our communities safe.

On behalf of West Sussex Fire and Rescue Authority, I am committed to supporting the Chief Fire Officer to ensure West Sussex continues to have an effective, efficient and resilient fire and rescue service for the people of West Sussex, those who visit our county, and for the wider community in case of national emergency.

Throughout the service I have seen a high level of dedication from staff that leaves me in no doubt that our fire and rescue teams will continue to provide the best service possible for our communities now and in the future. For that insight I wish to thank the staff across the service.

Duncan Crow

Cabinet Member for Fire & Rescue and Communities



Introduction

As Chief Fire Officer of West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service I am pleased to introduce our Statement of Assurance for 2019/2020.

The Statement reinforces my commitment to provide our communities with clear information about how we manage public funds and assure the effectiveness of our financial, governance and operational fire service arrangements.

We provide a 24/7 emergency response service to deal with fires, road traffic collisions and a wide range of emergencies. Our staff also deliver activities to reduce fires and road traffic collisions, improve community safety, enforce fire safety legislation and reduce risk in the community. We continue to work closely with our neighbouring services, and other blue light responders, to maximise the benefit of public spending and ensure West Sussex remains a safe county.

We are committed to saving, protecting and improving the lives of people in our county; and that our community is assured they have a fire service able to respond to all reasonably foreseeable emergencies. When you need us, rest assured, our professional teams will continue to deliver the service West Sussex expects and deserves.

Dr Sabrina Cohen-Hatton

Chief Fire Officer for West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service



What is a Statement of Assurance?

Fire and rescue authorities must provide assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and show how they have had due regard to the expectations set out in their Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

Statements of assurance should be open and transparent, demonstrating accountability to communities who expect to know how these services are being provided. This document outlines the way in which the West Sussex Fire & Rescue Authority and its fire and rescue service delivered the requirements contained in the National Fire and Rescue Framework and the authority's IRMP during 2019-20.

Governance

West Sussex County Council is the Fire Authority for West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (WSFRS) and is responsible for:

- Firefighting and rescue
- Protecting people and property from fire
- Promoting fire safety in the home
- Providing special services for emergencies

The county council is made up of 70 councillors who are each elected to represent one division every four years. Functions are allocated across the full council, the Cabinet and a range of committees.

The Constitution explains how the county council operates and decisions are made, and the procedures which are followed to make sure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. All members meet together as the full council and they are responsible for deciding some of the overall policies and setting the budget each year.

The WSCC Cabinet, or 'Executive', has nine members selected from the Conservative majority. The Cabinet proposes the key policy decisions of the council, which are subject to agreement by the full county council. Each Cabinet Member is allocated a portfolio of work for which they take personal responsibility. WSFRS is the responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Fire & Rescue and Communities and the county council holds the position of the Fire Authority. The Cabinet Member for WSFRS is Councillor Duncan Crow.

Decisions relating to the fire and rescue service and transformation plans of the service will be scrutinised by the Fire & Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee which was established at the full county council meeting on 17 December 2019.

WSFRS is embedded within WSCC. As such, the service is linked to a range of key strategic planning areas that aids a holistic approach to keeping residents safe. These include emergency management, transport and spatial planning, the design of support for vulnerable people, flood risk management and the overall place shaping and democratic ownership of an area.

Planning and policy framework

WSFRS operates as part of WSCC, which sets a clear framework for the work the service does.

The key documents relating to this area are:

[The West Sussex Plan](#): The plan sets out how the county council plans to shape its services for the next five years.

[How the County Council spends your money](#)

WSFRS also operates under broader corporate policies on:

[Fraud and corruption](#), [Equality and Inclusion policy](#) and [Pay Policy](#).

Your fire and rescue service

The FRS has three fundamental areas of focus: prevention, protection and response. Eight immediate response fire engines are based at six fire stations – Crawley, Worthing, Bognor, Littlehampton, Chichester and Horsham. These stations are permanently crewed using a system called Group Crewing.

There are also four fire engines crewed by wholetime firefighters working from 7am until 7pm, from Monday to Friday, at Shoreham, Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath and East Grinstead. They carry out immediate response and community safety work during these hours.

Many of our fire stations are crewed by Retained Duty System (RDS) firefighters who provide an agreed amount of cover 'on-call' via an alerting system. We do not underestimate the dedication and commitment required to be an on-call firefighter and work hard to support our staff who provide this invaluable service.

As with many other services across the country, we have seen a decline in the number of available RDS firefighters in recent years, however we are now seeing positive signs of improvement. Our retention and recruitment rates have improved over the last 12 months, we have employed 44 new RDS employees with 24 deciding to leave the service, in previous years the numbers of starters and leavers has been broadly the same.

However, we acknowledge that changes to the way we live, and the demands placed upon RDS members time means that being available to respond to emergency calls is often a challenge for individuals with families and work pressures. Supporting and improving our RDS remains a key priority for WSFRS and we have established action plans within our IRMP to develop future options for the service.

From firefighter to Chief Fire Officer, at the end of this financial year we employed the full-time equivalent of 317 operational staff and 221.25 FTE RDS crew, along with support staff and volunteers. As staff leave through retirement or transferring to other services we continue to recruit and train the firefighters of the future. This gives us the opportunity to ensure that our workforce reflects the communities that we serve. The service we provide is thanks to the dedication, commitment and hard work of every member of the WSFRS team.

Financial performance overview

WSFRS is an integrated part of WSCC. As such, it receives a range of services provided centrally, either via county council back office functions or corporately procured contracts. These include provision for payroll, pensions and human resources administration, human resources and organisational development advice and services, occupational health services, IT and communications, facilities management and estates maintenance, rates and utilities, insurances, legal advice and procurement services.

Costs relating to these areas are accounted for as a whole and are not apportioned at FRS level. Best value and high-quality services in all these areas are sought and achieved council wide.

Financial management for the FRS in areas including assets and estate, revenue provision, debt, and treasury management are covered under arrangements for the whole of the county council and, again, are not reported solely for the FRS.

The fire service's total net controllable expenditure for the 2019-20 financial year was £26.8 million. This is broken down as follows.

How your money is spent

Most of the £26.8 million budget is invested in frontline services including firefighting, rescue operations and community safety activity. This is summarised as the following:

- Firefighting and rescue operations - £22,011,154
- Community fire safety - £4,352,772
- Fire service emergency planning and civil resilience - £390,071.

In addition to the existing FRS base budget, the county council agreed further funding over a three-year period to deliver the improvements required following the Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) report. In 2019-20, the Fire Improvement plan spent £0.671m, which is included in the spend shown above.

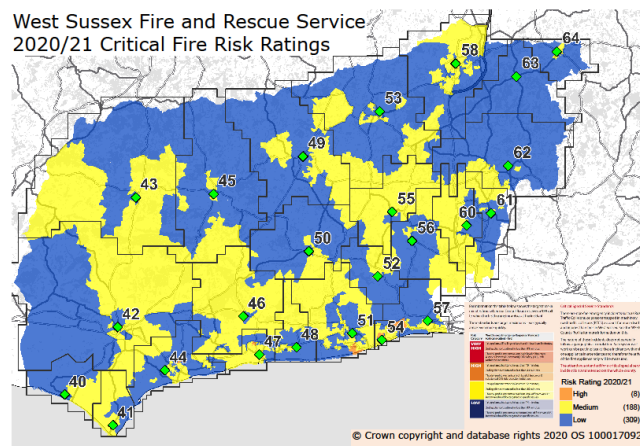
HMICFRS revisited the service in January 2020, following the inspection in November 2018. In a letter to the Chief Fire Officer, the inspectors noted that the Fire and Rescue Service has made 'tangible improvements' in a number of areas and could see an 'accelerated pace with the improvement work over the past few months.

Managing risk

As a service we must understand and identify our greatest risks in order to be able to effectively manage our resources.

We record information about every emergency call we receive and analyse where, why and how incidents have occurred to help us understand where incidents might happen in the future and how we are best placed to prevent them. We also use the extensive local knowledge of our firefighters and officers, alongside the latest modelling software, demographic profiling, census data and information from our partner agencies.

All this information is pulled together by our risk team in a Critical Fire Risk Map (pictured below) which is updated every year based on rolling data from the previous three years.



The critical fire risk map is part of our local Risk Management Plans and is used to assist in the targeting of prevention activity allowing WSFRS to focus on the most vulnerable residents and those communities at highest risk, thereby ensuring its resources are used efficiently to achieve the best possible outcomes for our local communities. They are also used as the basis for our Emergency Response Standards. All this information informs our Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

This shows that, for the period covered by this report, most of the county was classified as low or medium risk. Where small pockets of high risk are identified we can target our resources in proportion to those needs.

Operational performance report

During this financial year WSFRS attended **9,522** incidents in West Sussex with 1,914 being categorised as critical incidents. These are incidents where there is a risk to life or property. Of all these incidents, 1,334 were critical special services (such as a road traffic collision), while 580 were critical fires. Please note these figures relate to incidents attended within West Sussex.

Past 5 years historic (annual) data	2015 /16	2016 /17	2017 /18	2018 /19	2019 /20
Critical Special Services	765	771	1007	1140	1346
Critical Fires	732	800	734	622	585
All Incidents	8552	8842	9241	9292	9582
Over the Border Calls	202	162	233	285	234

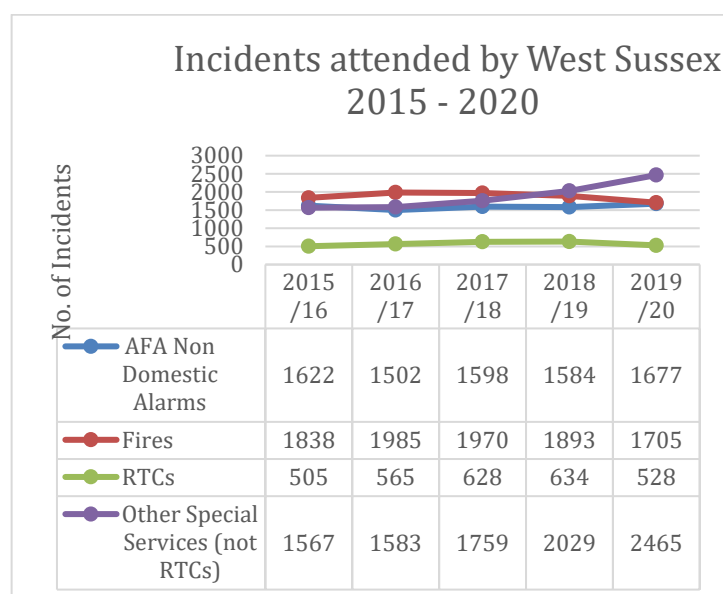
Our critical special service incidents have seen an increase from previous years as we are now using an improved method of measuring the incidents which fall into the critical special service category. This means incidents that previously may not have been categorised this way now are and will be for future reports. The higher number is mainly due to this change rather than an underlying rapid rise in critical specials services.

We attended 234 incidents throughout the year to assist our neighbouring fire and rescue services. This is as a result of working with those services to send the fastest fire engine, regardless of county borders.

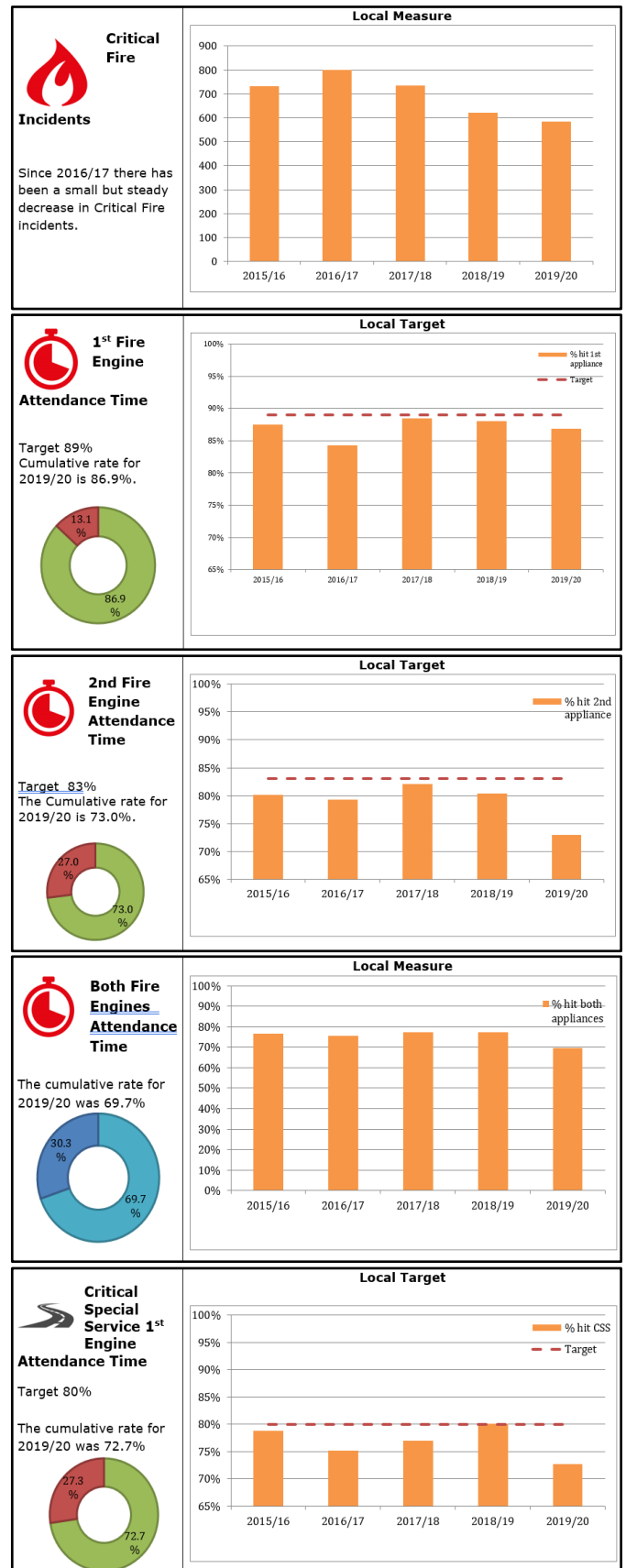
Operational performance targets and measures

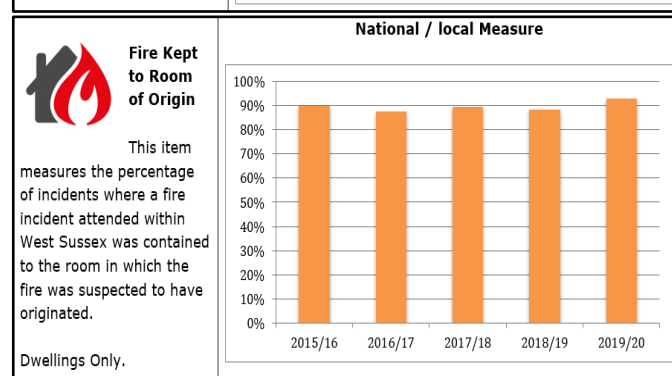
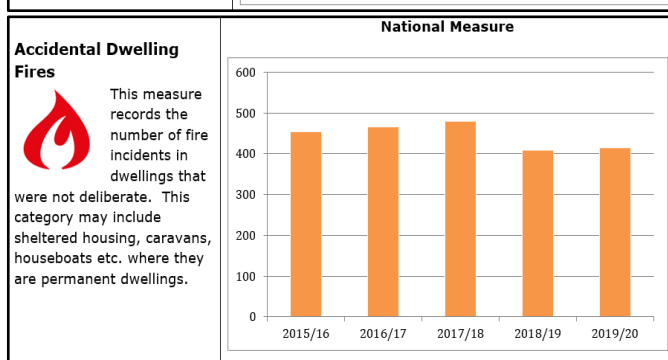
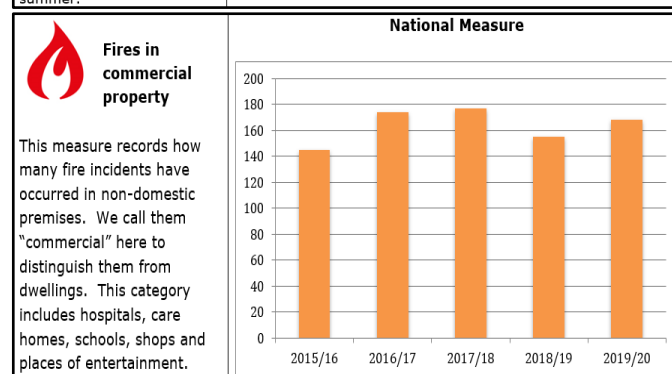
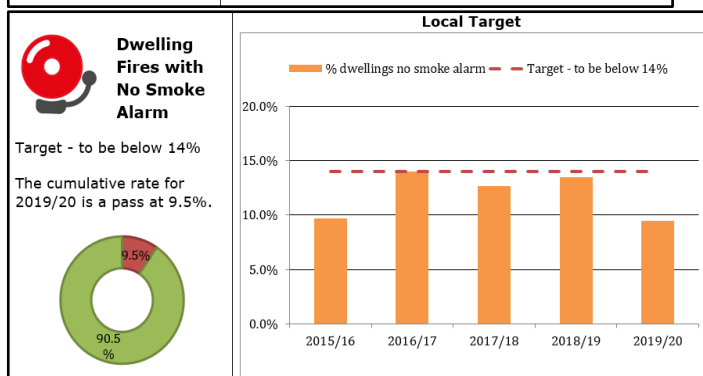
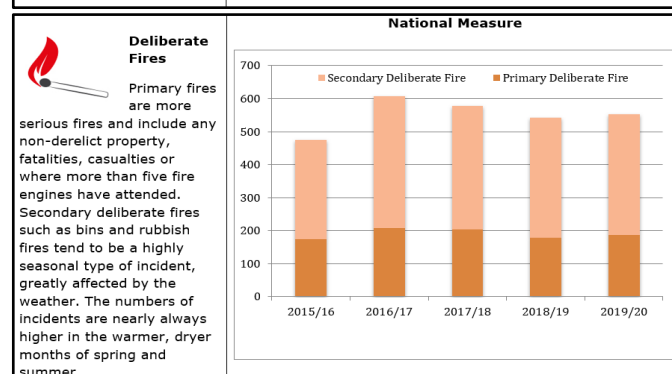
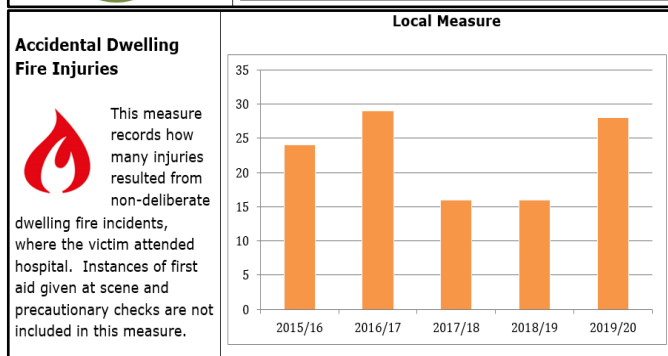
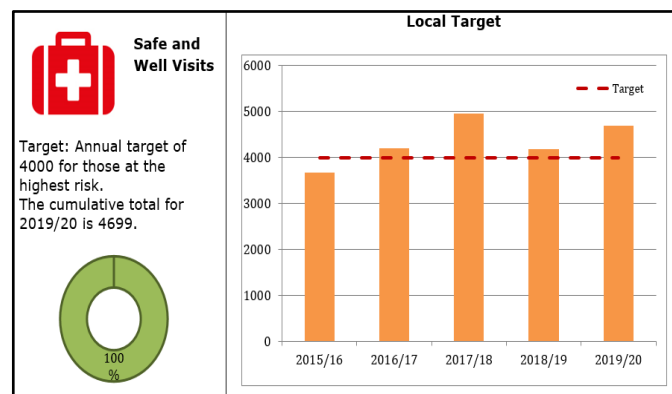
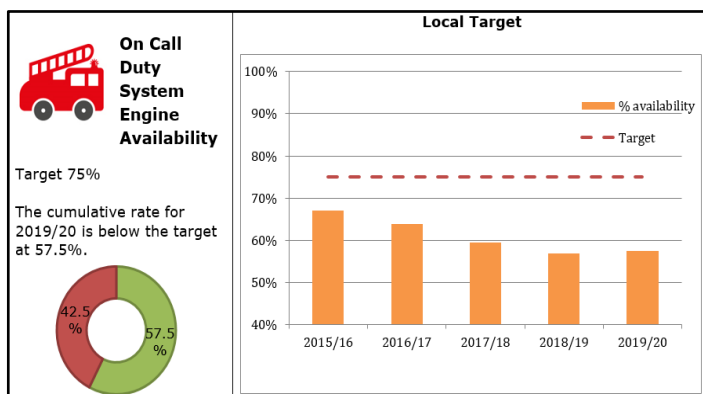
In order to ensure we deliver the commitments we have made in our IRMP we monitor our performance on a quarterly basis. In the reporting year 2019-2020 we had more than 60 key performance indicators and measures which were subject to both internal and external scrutiny. In this reporting year the Fire Authority chose 13 operational performance measures and targets that were reported on a quarterly basis as well as annually in this Statement of Assurance. Details of these are on the following pages.

As we strive for continuous improvement, we have recently undertaken a review of our performance indicators to ensure that they continue to measure our service in the most effective way. We have identified some amendments and some additional indicators that will be measured for the year 2020-2021. This ensures we scrutinise and manage our data to continually drive through improved performance.



#	Indicator	Measure/ target
1	Critical Fire Incidents	Measure
2	1 st Fire engine attendance time	Target
3	2 nd Fire engine attendance time	Target
4	Both appliance attendance	Measure
5	Critical special service attendance time	Target
6	On call duty system availability	Target
7	Accidental dwelling fires	Measure
8	Dwelling fires no smoke alarm	Target
9	Accidental dwelling fire injuries	Measure
10	Safe and well checks	Target
11	Deliberate fires	Measure
12	Fires in commercial property	Measure
13	Fire kept to room of origin	Measure





National Resilience

We have continued to support the National Resilience (NR) Programme which was a UK Government response to the threat of a 9/11 style attack on the UK and critical weather-related events in Sussex and Nationally.

The Technical Rescue Unit (TRU) delivered National Urban Search and Rescue capability in financial year 2019/2020.

The Technical Rescue Unit (TRU) is partly funded by a Home Office grant of £408,800 to be the Strategic Reserve Urban Search and Rescue Team. This has enabled the team to respond to collapsed buildings and major transport incidents anywhere in the UK. Following the withdrawal of this funding we no longer provide this capability nationally.

The High-Volume Pumping (HVP) Unit based at Bognor Regis Fire Station is an NR asset. The HVP is able to pump much larger volumes of water than standard fire engines during flooding and large fires

We receive a grant to specially train and prepare a number of West Sussex firefighters to respond to terrorist incidents. This is known as a Marauding Terrorist Attack (MTA). This grant was for £49,357 in 2019/20. National Resilience Assets are maintained and serviced under national maintenance contracts. Our ability to effectively deploy them is tested by assurance audits carried out by National Resilience Capability Officers.

Integrated Risk Management Plan

WSFRS has a statutory duty to consult on, and publish, as detailed in the Fire and Rescue National Framework, an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

The Plan must cover a three-year time span and be reviewed and revised as often as is necessary to ensure fire and rescue authorities are able to deliver the requirements of the Framework. This review must include reaction to regional, or national events. This includes the introduction in 2018 of new legislation affecting fire & Rescue services requiring the duty to collaborate and the emerging risks identified from the 2017 Grenfell incident in London.

This plan identifies and assesses all reasonably foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect our community, including those of a cross-border, multi-authority and/or national nature.

Once we have identified these risks, we review the resources we have in place and the activity we need to undertake to meet these risks. We then develop plans to improve the safety of our residents and staff. From this we developed the IRMP, with supporting strategies and action plans that cover the period 2018-22. This plan reflects how we will respond to the risk.

The plan outlines:

- **Prevention** – educating the community on how to reduce risks through safe and well visits, school visits and other training.
- **Protection** – providing safer public spaces within the built environment, fire safety inspections and enforcement.
- **Response** – sending fire engines and firefighters to emergency incidents. This can include fires, road traffic collisions and flooding.
- **People** – how we address the challenges we face in delivering a highly trained, inclusive and diverse workforce.

- **Customer Centred Value for Money** – ensuring everything we do is as efficient as possible and delivers what our communities need.
- **Partnership and collaboration** – how we will work with other organisations to achieve our aims.

To help us deliver the IRMP action plans as well as the areas of improvement and concern raised by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) we have introduced a Programme Steering Board to ensure effective controls are in place to manage risks, assumptions, issues and dependencies. This Board provides support, monitors progress, and makes recommendations that will enable Fire Programmes to be delivered on time, within cost and to our high-quality requirements, this ultimately drives the delivery of the change identified in our action plans.

We are measuring our progress in this board against project and programme milestones as well using our key performance indicators to measure success and report progress to the Fire Authority.

The IRMP provides a detailed understanding of our communities and the risks they face. It also considers wider issues outside of West Sussex including national risks, to develop national resilience capabilities that are available to support our service when dealing with major incidents that stretch normal resources, such as major flooding.

In this Annual Statement of Assurance, we are reporting on year two of the action plan (2019-20), which has seen some significant progress with items of note being:

Completion of our transition to a joint fire control partnership arrangement. Joint Fire Control went live successfully on 4 December 2019. This has been established under a Fire and Rescue Services Act

Section 16 agreement which details its governance, performance and funding.

The ongoing investment and modernisation of our firefighting equipment and techniques is key to firefighter and public safety. We have recently enhanced our firefighting capabilities with the introduction of Fog Nails, which complement the use of our new smoke curtains when resolving building/property fires. The Fog nails enable us to deliver water into rooms within a building and difficult to access areas such as roof spaces and basements. They create a fine misting effect that can dramatically reduce the temperature and spread of a fire. Being able to tackle a fire in this way means firefighters are kept safer, property can be preserved more effectively, and firefighting time is reduced.

The investment in upgraded heavy hydraulic rescue equipment which we use to rescue people from vehicles was delivered in this reporting year. Modern vehicles have increased safety designs to better protect people from harm, but this means that we now need more specialist heavier equipment to rescue people from them. We also use this equipment to rescue people from larger vehicles such as Large Good Vehicles' across our three Heavy Rescue Tenders. This equipment enhances the capability we already have on our frontline fire engines and provides the specialist equipment required for these types of incident.

The completed procurement of seven new fire engines, which aligns to our strategy of a mix of 12 tonne and 18 tonne fire engines against the risk profile. All seven delivered this year are 12 tonne Volvos which we call Medium Rescue Pumps (MRP). The 12 tonne Volvo MRP is lower, shorter, narrower and has a much smaller turning circle than the 18 tonne Super Rescue Pumps (SRP). This will allow the MRPs to access more roads and be nimbler in crowded towns and

narrow rural roads which will assist us in improving our response times. They will carry new equipment such as a 9 metre main ladder and Ultra High-Pressure Hose Reels, which offer new capabilities which will complement the equipment of the 18 tonne Super Rescue Pumps. This will ensure that at every significant fire the incident commander has a full range of tactical options, including Ultra High Pressure, 22mm Hose Reels, Compressed Air Foam and traditional lay flat hose of 70 and 52mm diameter. Which again will improve our effectiveness in firefighting and rescue operations.

We work together on a number of projects with our neighbouring services under 4Fire.

Projects that we have collaborated on date include working with East Sussex and Surrey fire and rescue services, and with Sussex and Surrey Police on a more efficient and effective fleet management programme, a joint approach to noise management and a joint e-learning platform for staff training.

The 4Fire collaboration has also included the delivery of a three-fire service wholetime training course developed and led by WSFRS. Gatwick FRS have now joined the three services with sharing the same learning platform for Maintenance of Competence (MoC) and training.

The 4Fire Integrated Transport Function initiative has delivered an outward facing 360-degree camera package will be fitted to all frontline fire engines. The first installation has taken place on our new 12 tonne fire engines. Front and rear facing cameras are also scheduled to be fitted to officer cars. This additional safety equipment will be for the purpose of public and responding crew's safety.

West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service's health and safety team have completed over 25 noise assessments across the workplace, results and information are being shared with our collaborative partners of East Sussex, Surrey and Kent Fire and Rescue Services in the delivery of the 4Fire (Noise) initiative. This has significantly contributed to the understanding of the noise impacts of equipment used at incidents and during training activities may have on our operational crews. We have been able to improve crew safety by understanding this impact.

We have been working collaboratively with East Sussex Fire & Rescue, Sussex Police and the South East Coast Ambulance Service to assist with gaining entry to premises during medical emergencies. A delay in gaining access to properties can have a detrimental impact on the patient, by utilising crews we are able to gain swift access for ambulance crews using our equipment and training.

Fire and rescue support has also reduced the operational demand on Sussex Police colleagues who have previously undertaken this work. We have attended over 200 incidents of this type since January 2019 as part of a collaborative pilot project which has now been adopted as core business.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (known commonly as firefighting uniform) is provided to all operational staff to protect them from a range of hazards encountered during the course of their operational duties. Our previous contract for the supply and management of fire kit ended in January 2020. Using a collaborative procurement solution established by Kent Fire & Rescue Service and following in-depth technical assessment and subsequent staff consultation on their preferred PPE solution, replacement fire kit was issued in January 2020. The new provision also includes a rescue jacket that can be worn at

non-fire incidents and reflects the evolving role of a modern firefighter.

We have made improvements to the way that we allocate and arrange our crewing resources through the introduction of a new Service Delivery Centre to support and coordinate the use of our Wholetime and Retained Duty System staff. This will allow us to maximise the availability of our fire engines and will enable the most efficient use of our crewing resources in support of our core prevention and protection activities

We have conducted a review of the fleet of special fire engines that support unusual and larger incidents to improve our service capability where appropriate and provide future delivery options that will be delivered in 2020-21.

During this reporting year we have been introducing a new and improved IT risk management system to replace the current ageing database. Our investment is a specific, tried and tested risk management system that will improve service effectiveness and efficiency. Firefighter safety and improvements in public protection will also be realised. It provides a mobile application for front-line Protection, Prevention and Response staff which is intuitive and easy to use; early feedback from future users in all areas has been very positive.

To support our staff wellbeing strategy over the past year we have:

- Recognised that supporting the Health & Wellbeing in the most effective way requires direction and input from a Wellbeing professional. As a result of this we created a Health & Wellbeing Manager post, and successfully recruited to this position in June 2020. The Health & Wellbeing Manager will be responsible for managing the Physical

Education Officer, ensuring that we have an aligned approach to the physical, mental and emotional health of our employees.

- To support our managers, we have developed and published guidance on bullying and harassment in the workplace. The guidelines were developed with input from staff, managers and the representative bodies. In order to build on this support, we will also be rolling out other initiatives such as staff engagement surgeries at stations and within teams creating a space for staff to talk to someone about any concerns. We will also be developing a forum of diversity and inclusion champions, and in addition delivering training for both managers and staff to raise awareness and to improve the way in which we manage instances of bullying and or harassment

As a result of feedback sessions and engagement with staff we have identified that many staff at WSFRS need help and support with a wide range of issues that are not necessarily related to work. This includes domestic violence, menopause and caring responsibilities. To ensure that there is a consistent approach across WSFRS we have developed and published a Staff Special Circumstances Support Policy, as well as guidance for staff and managers.

Last year we launched and ran our 'It's OK not to be OK' awareness campaign during the year to encourage staff to openly talk about their mental and emotional health with their line manager and colleagues so that support mechanisms are available to support our staff. This initiative supports our

Employee Assistance Scheme, which is a confidential service that staff are able to access 24/7 to speak to someone if they are experiencing difficulties.

Our pathway was developed for referring staff to the occupational health team to ensure early intervention and that our occupational health providers are receiving relevant and up to date information. The review resulted in a clearer pathway for mental health referrals and early access to interventions for our staff.

Working with colleagues in WSCC to develop initiatives to support staff experiencing mental health issues. The aim is to create a work environment where it is the 'norm' to discuss mental health and staff know where to go to access help. An initiative to introduce Mental Health First Aiders across WSCC and WSFRS is planned for implementation in 20/21.

We have identified that some of our staff have previously experienced a traumatic event as part of their job role. For some, this has included events that might have occurred sometime earlier, such as during time served in the armed forces. We therefore considered it important to embed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) training as part of the initial recruits' induction course from this year's intake, in order to create awareness.

Acknowledged that Covid-19 presented some challenges and we considered it important that we regularly provide our staff with appropriate guidance during the pandemic. Information provided to date includes:

- How to manage their mental wellbeing whilst working at home;

- Bereavement and the change transition;

In addition to this, managers were encouraged to hold regular wellbeing meetings (virtually) with team members. Where concerns were raised by managers or members of staff, further support was made available through the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) or telephone calls with Occupational Health.

As part of the development and delivery of our action plans for equality inclusion and diversity across the service over the past year we:

- Recognised that the WSCC Values needed to be adopted by the service and in order to undertake this successfully, it needed to make some changes.
- We recognise that the organisation is underrepresented by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds and female staff, and that currently our workforce does not reflect the diversity of the communities that we serve. This was also reflected in a lack of people from ethnic minority backgrounds applying for jobs with the service.
- As a starting point WSFRS decided to appoint a Diversity & Inclusion Adviser to support managers in the organisation to promote diversity and inclusion and give advice on appropriate actions to take to improve the diversity profile of the workforce, including attraction. This includes working with teams who engage with the community to ensure that all groups are involved in events, are consulted with and given the opportunity to contribute.

- Our Diversity & Inclusion Adviser is now a member of the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) Executive Leadership Team. We have engaged with the community and staff to ensure that we involve and reach all groups and arranged and promoted a number of events including:
- WSFRS female Firefighters participated in a heat tolerance research project led by the University of Brighton with UK Fire Research & Development and FireFit UK;
- All female crew for International Women's Day 2020
- Participated in Worthing and Brighton Pride Parades July and August 2019
- Staff attendance at AFSA summer and winter 2019 conferences
- Engaged with AFSA and other FRSs to begin sharing best practice on community engagement to improve business fire safety outcomes.
- Planned to host AFSA regional development day (on hold until Mar 2021 due to COVID19) to share best practice and knowledge with invited delegates from across WSFRS, neighbouring fire and rescue services, Gatwick Airport Fire Service, Crawley Borough Council and services across WSCC.

We are working hard on plans to develop a new training centre and fire station in Horsham. We are continually seeking to improve our training offer to our teams and recognise that a reduction in fires and operational incidents reduces the opportunity for learning. The initial design was approved by WSCC on 18 February 2020 and we are now in the process of developing this design fully with an aim to submit planning submissions in 20/21.

Initially, the scheme progressed as part of the One Public Estate Programme but is now a standalone WSFRS project that will also support Joint Emergency Service Interoperability (JESIP) training where required. The current design will provide facilities for a new fire station, state of the art live fire training facility and cold smoke training tower and the anticipated completion date for the project is Autumn 2022.

In order to ensure that we are aware of the risks at a local level and that our crews are prepared to respond to them, we have introduced a Local Risk Management Plan approach. This includes the development of an app that all firefighters can see, that provides a simple, visual overview of incidents and risks that are specific to the station area. It also provides an insight into the communities that live and work in that area, so that if those communities have specific needs, such as additional support for vulnerable people or for different language needs, we can prepare for them. An action plan, tailored to each individual station ground, is being developed based on that data and the professional knowledge of local station staff. This means that we are helping our crews not only to better understand the kind of incidents that they are likely to be called to, but also gives them the opportunity to fully prepare for them. Our prevention and protection activity, as well as exercise scenarios are being tailored to meet those specific risks, making sure that we are honing our knowledge and skills for the best outcomes possible for our residents.

Prevention work is delivered with the aim of reducing incidents and their impact, as well as supporting communities to take care of themselves wherever possible, through the provision of education, advice and equipment

Specialist staff within the Prevention team focus on residents who are most at risk from fire and those who are most at risk of death and injury on the road. Targeted programmes work on an individual and group basis with the most vulnerable adults and children with the highest risk levels and most complex issues.

The team has been restructured in 2020 to create capacity focussing on ensuring the team have the knowledge and skill to respond to pressures in specific areas of statutory delivery and to the areas of concern identified by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

The overarching principles of the restructure are as follows:

- A risk-based approach – as defined in the IRMP
- To support communities by responding to the greatest areas of risk, threat and harm, not just fire and road safety
- To develop and expand the role of a firefighter in relation to prevention
- To maintain and improve our resident's health and wellbeing

It is essential that the team focuses on working with the highest risk and most vulnerable groups in relation to core fire and rescue service activity. This means continuing our work with children who have a potentially dangerous fascination with fire (Firewise), Safeguarding, further developing the service's volunteer programme and the delivery of Safe & Well Visits (SWV) to residents who are most at risk and have a high likelihood of fire in their home. It also includes existing work with victims of domestic violence, and contributions to Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements. The team will be able to extend its delivery to include the highest risk individuals and communities across the county to reflect the risks identified in the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

The restructure is now complete, outcomes of the restructure will be evident in the service's corporate performance measures published in 2020/21.

Throughout 2019-20 Protection has been reviewing its service delivery including fire safety audits and enforcement arrangements in WSFRS which also addresses the concerns raised by HMICFRS.

A Fire Safety Enforcement Strategy (FSES) has been published which defines the fire safety risks in West Sussex and how we will address, these risks. This is the supporting rationale for us increasing our staffing level to respond to the risk profile in the county.

The Fire Safety team has been restructured to better align staff levels to the risk identified in both the IRMP and FSES. This has permanently increased the establishment by eight people in dedicated fire safety posts, following significant investment from WSCC.

The team name Business Fire Safety has been changed in favour of Fire Safety, as we are dealing with more premises under the Housing Act, working closely with our local housing authorities and the term business often caused confusion with the public 'who live in housing not businesses'.

The new structure has helped deliver an increase in output delivering 1,391 full premises audits; 259 resulted in notices being issued. This increases in output also cleared the audit backlog noted by the HMICFRS.

We successfully instigated the removal of high-risk cladding panels systems from a large hotel and a high-rise residential block. We will continue to work with our other 72 high-rise residential blocks, to directly support the work of the National Protection Board in addressing risks. This is driven through our learning from past incidents such as Grenfell and ensuring the safety of residents is paramount.

We responded to 185 referrals to fire safety, relating to concerns from business partners and members of the public. A referral is a fire safety complaint from a member of the public or a professional partner. All referrals are immediately risk assessed and often receive a fast response from a fire safety officer. Where immediate action was required in some of these establishments in this year, we issued eight prohibition notices, which is where we can stop people using all or part of a building if considered unsafe to continue to do so. This resulted in one prosecution being heard and four further prosecutions currently going through legal process.

During March 2020 our operation was impacted by the Covid-19 crisis and we have maintained our ability to enforce during this period by the adoption of PPE and new techniques, in line with NFCC Guidance, such as telephone audits. However, the impact of Covid-19 will continue to change how we approach fire safety enforcement in 2020-21.

[The IRMP action plan](#) details the outcomes of each delivery year and what will be delivered in future years.

You can also find more information in our [HMICFRS Improvement Plan](#).

Type of inspection	Description	Number undertaken in 19/20
Prosecutions under the Fire Safety Order 2005	As an enforcing authority, we use our power to prosecute the people responsible for fire safety failings that endanger people.	1 complete 4 pending
Full Premises Audits under the Fire Safety Order 2005	We proactively inspect buildings to ensure they are safe for people who use those buildings. We focus on the buildings people sleep in as there is most risk in those.	1391
Notices	We issue a range of legal notices to make the responsible person improve the safety of buildings when we find them to be substandard.	259
Enforcement Notices	One of the most powerful notices we issue is to instruct responsible person to make changes to buildings to make them safer.	19
Fire Safety Referrals	We respond to concerns or complaints from members of the public or other agencies, some are minor but some are very serious and so it is vital we can respond to these 24/7 to protect the safety of people.	185
Building Regulations	We comment on building regulation applications for workplaces and public places, to ensure new buildings are safe.	694
Licensing Applications	We comment on building regulation applications for places that provide alcohol and entertainment to ensure that the buildings are safe for the public	619
Town and Country Planning Applications	We comment on these applications to ensure that there are hydrants and good access for fire engines in new developments.	2110
Hydrant inspections	To ensure we can access water for firefighting we test all hydrants in the county at least once every three years.	5246
Hydrants Repaired	We repair hydrants to maintain the water supply for firefighting.	102
Tier 2 Fire Investigations	These are the most serious investigations, carried out by a specialist fire investigation officer. These are typically fires where people are seriously injured.	18

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS)

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspected West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service (WSFRS) in the autumn of 2018. [The report](#) was issued in June 2019.

This is the first time that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) had inspected fire and rescue services across England. Their focus was on the service provided to the public, and the way we use available resources. The inspection assessed how effectively and efficiently WSFRS prevents, protects the public against, and responds to fires and other emergencies. They also assessed how well we look after the people who work for the service.

The service worked hard to address the issues that were raised.

To assist in the delivery of the Home Office Inspectorate findings we established an Improvement Board. We welcomed the report to enable continual improvement across our service.

In January 2020 HMICFRS carried out a three-day revisit of WSFRS.

The reinspection team paid specific attention to the Prevention and Protection areas, which were the main concerns raised in the report with regards to public safety.

They reported seeing a clear commitment to making further improvements and they could see an accelerated pace with the improvement work over the past few months, mitigating the risk to public safety.

The inspectors reported that West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service has made 'tangible improvements' in a number of areas and they could see an accelerated pace with the

improvement work over the past few months, mitigating the risk to public safety.

They also recognised the new reporting line with the Chief Fire Officer reporting directly to the Chief Executive as part of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) structure within WSCC. Recognition of recent National Fire Chief Council support and Local Government Association (LGA) involvement was also positive and new allocated funding from WSCC was recognised as a positive step towards increasing capacity.

Legislation

The FRS works within a clear legislative context. Key legislation documents are as follows:

The National Fire and Rescue Service Framework for England 2018

Under section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (the 2004 Act), the Secretary of State must prepare a Fire and Rescue National Framework. The Framework:

- Must set out priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in connection with the discharge of their functions.
- May contain guidance to fire and rescue authorities in connection with the discharge of any of their functions.
- May contain any other matter relating to fire and rescue authorities or their functions that the Secretary of State considers appropriate.

Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

This Act came into effect on 1 October 2004. It clarifies the duties and powers of fire authorities to:

- Promote fire safety
- Fight fires

- Protect people and property from fires
- Rescue people from road traffic incidents
- Deal with other specific emergencies, such as flooding or a terrorist attack
- Respond to the particular needs of our communities and the risks they face.

Fire and Rescue Service (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007

The Fire and Rescue Service Emergencies (England) Order 2007 outlines the additional statutory duties of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 for fire authorities.

The duty requires authorities, where provision of resources has been made by central government, to respond to incidents, both within and outside the authority area, involving Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear hazards (CBRN) and Urban Search and Rescue (USAR).

The Order complements the National Mutual Assistance Protocol, to which this Authority is a signatory. This requires fire authorities to make a reasonable response to requests for assistance in relation to any large-scale emergency outside their area.

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

This Order is a statutory instrument, applicable only in England and Wales, which places the responsibility on individuals within an organisation to carry out risk assessments to identify, manage and reduce the risk of fire. It became law on October 1 2006.

Civil Contingencies Act 2004 Fire and Rescue Authorities are 'Category 1 responders' under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

This Act sets out the full set of civil protection duties, including assessing the risk of emergencies happening (ranging from widespread flooding to terrorist attacks) and using this to inform contingency planning. Fire and Rescue Authorities must ensure that emergency plans and business continuity management arrangements are in place.

The Equality Act 2010

This Act is designed to reform and harmonise equality laws, to increase equality of opportunity and to have regard to the desirability of reducing socio-economic inequalities. It is designed to legally protect people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society.

The Policing and Crime Act 2017

The Act makes three key provisions pertaining to the FRS:

1. It places a duty on the emergency services, Police, Fire and Ambulance, to collaborate, when there is a proven benefit to operational effectiveness or efficiency.
2. It established an independent inspectorate for the Fire and Rescue Service, the HMICFRS
3. It enables transfer of Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) duties to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) where a case for change is made.

Further legislation which applies to the Fire Authority can be found within our [IRMP](#).

Contact us

In an emergency you should always dial 999.

Visit our website to find out more about [West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service](#).

Your views and comments on this Statement of Assurance are very welcome.

If you have feedback or any questions, please get in touch with us.

By email: wsfrs@westsussex.gov.uk

By telephone: 01243 777100

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