

Fire Improvement Plan – June 2020 Update

1. The 2020/21 budget provided £1.8m of funding; £0.6m base funding and £1.2m funded from flexible capital receipts, to continue to deliver on the Improvement Plan approved by Members in July 2019 and to specifically address the areas of concern raised by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) when they re-visited West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (WSFRS) on 19th February 2020.
2. The Inspectorate also commented after their visit that the Service had made tangible improvements to mitigate the risk to public safety. They noted an accelerated pace and that staff reported that they felt supported.
3. There was a strong message from an NFCC delegation in a letter to the Minister that the timelines of the original improvement plan presented to Members in July 2019 were too ambitious and therefore some activity was re-phased and moved to subsequent years, requiring the associated budget to move with it. Therefore, £0.282m was set aside in a reserve to meet the additional costs in 2020/21 as a result of the re-phasing of the original timeline.
4. The Improvement Plan at this early stage of the financial year suggests further funding of £0.371m will be required in year; although it is acknowledged that this value is likely to change as plans are finalised. Options are being considered for how this potential funding requirement will be met.
5. As stated above, the Service continues to address the four main causes of concern raised by the Inspectorate and the progress and resources applied within the plan are summarised below:

Preventing Fire and Other Risks

“HMICFRS found that prevention activity does not always align with a risk identified in the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). Home fire safety checks are not being carried out in a timely manner and there is a backlog of 552 high risk cases”

6. The service needed to achieve two main things to address this area. They needed to ensure safe and well checks were targeted to those most at risk, and then to achieve them in a timely manner.
7. As a result eight posts have been added to Prevention and significantly increased capacity within the team. The backlog of safe and well visits was

eliminated back in March last year, although we do anticipate having some new pent up demand as a result of Covid-19, as staff were not able to visit homes during the lockdown period. However, all Fire and Rescue Service's will be in a similar position and the service is exploring options for meeting this within their current resource allocation as part of its recovery planning. We expect the additional capacity created in the team to enable us to deal with any anticipated pent up demand.

Protecting the Public Through Fire Regulation

"The inspectorate noted that the service does not have a robust methodology for the risk-based inspection programme that identifies its highest risk premises. The database used to manage premises information is unreliable affecting the accuracy of the information. The service is unable to carry out the number of audits of high-risk premises that it commits to as part of its programme and Outdated IT systems were causing considerable challenges in terms of maintaining appropriate data sets and working efficiently and were hampering activity in both Prevention and Protection."

8. A core problem for the service was having insufficient capacity within protection teams to be able to carry out the number of audits that were required. The department restructured in November 2019, and additional capacity was introduced in the team (seven additional inspecting officer positions, two managers and two trainers). All of these positions are now filled and the backlog of fire safety audits was cleared in November 2019.
9. The Farynor IT system has been introduced and a test system is now live with a full roll out over the summer. Farynor will allow the service to deliver prevention and protection activities in the most efficient way using more up to date technology, allowing for increased accuracy in reporting as well as enabling a focus on areas of highest risk. There is a risk of a slight delay because of CAPITA availability due to Covid-19, however the project team is planning around this to minimise impact.

Promoting the Right Values and Culture

"West Sussex FRS staff sometimes act in ways that go against its core values. This is leading to bullying in the workplace."

10. We have appointed an Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion officer to enable a cross service approach to increased awareness and inclusion. This includes increased positive action and community engagement activities to attract a workforce that is more reflective of the communities we serve. We have recently recruited a Wellbeing officer to further complement this activity with a focus on staff wellbeing including mental health first aid. New Personal Protective Equipment has been rolled out across the service and work has been done on building the service identity.

Ensuring Fairness and Promoting Diversity

“West Sussex FRS does not engage with or and seek feedback from staff to understand their needs. We found this to especially be the case with some under-represented groups. When staff raise issues and concerns the service does not respond quickly enough.”

11. A new Fire and Rescue Service structure went live on 1st April 2020 to address the Improvement challenges and provide a clear overview of the teams to all staff. We have grown our activity relating to our workforce plan into a ‘People Programme’ which is a Service priority. The restructured service created a position for a strategic lead to increase capacity here and ensure that cultural change and people aspects are not just considered but are the cornerstone of our business processes.

Fire and Rescue Improvement Plan - Phase 1 Summary (June 2020)

	Revised Full Amount Estimated	Actual Spend 2019/20	Planned Spending for 2020/21	Projected Spend for 2020/21	Variation to Spending Plan 2020/21	Planned Spending for 2021/22
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Expenditure						
Equipment	100	0	100	100	0	0
HR	239	39	96	96	0	104
Improvement	1,626	116	807	807	0	703
People	193	35	110	110	0	48
Prevention	604	76	254	254	0	274
Protection	1,113	146	489	489	0	478
Response	803	227	288	288	0	288
Risk	268	26	116	116	0	126
Training	192	6	93	93	0	93
Total	5,138	671	2,353	2,353	0	2,114
Funding						
Base Budget				500		1,596
Fire Improvement Reserve				282		
Flexible Capital Receipts				1,200		
Total Funding Available				1,982		1,596
Potential Additional Funding Required				371		518