
Fire and Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee

30 September 2020

Statement of Assurance and Annual Report

Report by Chief Fire Officer

Summary

The Fire Authority is statutorily required under the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England to produce an annual statement of assurance. The purpose of such a statement is to provide assurances that the Fire Authority follows the National Framework as set out by the Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service in the following key areas:

- Finance details
- Governance
- Operational performance
- Framework requirements
- Future improvements

The Statement of Assurance is supported by an Annual Report that highlights key activity for the service last year, including the overall performance. The report covers the financial year from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

Focus for Scrutiny

That the contents of this report be reviewed along with attached draft submissions of the West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service Annual Statement of Assurance 2019-20 and the West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service Annual Report 2019-20 for comment by members of the Committee to Cabinet.

Proposal

1 Background and context

- 1.1 West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service produces a Statement of Assurance, supported by an annual report that details how the service delivers its vision, supporting plans and how it then reports on the progress made in the last year. The two draft documents have been produced for the financial year 2019-2020 and are attached:

- West Sussex Fire and Rescue Statement of Assurance 2019-2020
 - West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service Annual Report 2019-2020
- 1.2 Under the framework the statement of assurance should contain detail on governance arrangements, operational performance, financials and future improvements.
- 1.3 Fire authorities are accountable for their performance and should be open to evaluation to the communities they serve. Information should be accurate and transparent, robust and fit for purpose.
- 1.4 One of the principal aims of the Statement of Assurance is to provide an accessible way in which communities, government, local authorities and other partners may make a valid assessment of their local fire and rescue authority's performance.

2 Proposal details

- 2.1 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
- 2.2 Under the direction of the Cabinet Member for Fire and Rescue and Communities, WSFRS, within West Sussex County Council, has prepared a draft statement of assurance and annual report for 2020/21.
- 2.3 Decisions relating to the fire and rescue service will be scrutinised by the Fire & Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee which was established at the full county council meeting on 17 December 2019.
- 2.4 In the case of county council fire and rescue services the close working relationships that exist with other county council areas of responsibility such as adult care, children's services and public health are significant. This enables a holistic approach to keeping residents safe.

Annual Operational Performance report

- 2.5 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. 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.

Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Action Plan delivery

- 2.6 Fire and rescue authorities have a statutory requirement to publish an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), which is supported by service plans that improve the safety of our residents and staff. Our IRMP covers the period 2018-22.
- 2.7 The plan outlines the following strategic commitments:
- 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.
- 2.8 The service is midway through the current IRMP and development has commenced on the next iteration. The Improvement journey has gathered momentum and is now progressing well into our second year.

3 Other options considered (and reasons for not proposing)

- 3.1 The Fire Authority is statutorily required under the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England to produce an annual statement of assurance, therefore no other options can be considered.

4 Consultation, engagement and advice

- 4.1 Feedback from this meeting will be considered prior to the final draft being presented to Cabinet.

5 Finance

- 5.1 Most of the Council's £26.8m Fire & Rescue Service 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

- 5.2 In addition to the existing WSFRS 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.
- 5.3 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'.
- 5.4 Within the County Council back office support services (including Finance, HR, IT and Property) are treated as a corporate resource and are all held centrally and are not recharged to individual services, this means that the above costs relate only to the direct provision of the service itself.

6 Risk implications and mitigations

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
Not adopting a Statement of Assurance (SOA)	All information supporting this informs the Council's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) to ensure the SOA is accurate and timely to support the service.
Not recording information accurately	WSFRS records information about every emergency call received. It analyses where, why and how incidents have occurred to help understand where incidents might happen in the future and how it is best placed to prevent them. It also uses the latest modelling software, demographic profiling, census data and information from partner agencies. This information informs a critical fire risk map, which is updated every year based on rolling data from the previous three years.
Not mapping critical risk	The critical fire risk map is part of our local Risk Management Plans, facilitates the targeting of prevention activity to prioritise resources to the most vulnerable residents and those communities at highest risk. This ensures resources are used efficiently to achieve the best possible outcomes for our communities. 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.

7 Policy alignment and compliance

- 7.1 This report has positive implications for the community, as adoption of a Statement of Assurance and Annual Report supports the positive benefits of an effective Fire and Rescue Service to all residents in West Sussex.
- 7.2 In terms of environmental sustainability, the IRMP makes clear the Authority's commitment to reducing the environmental impact of its operations and provides an indication of work done to date.

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Appendices: **(A)** Statement of Assurance
 (B) Annual Report

Background papers: None