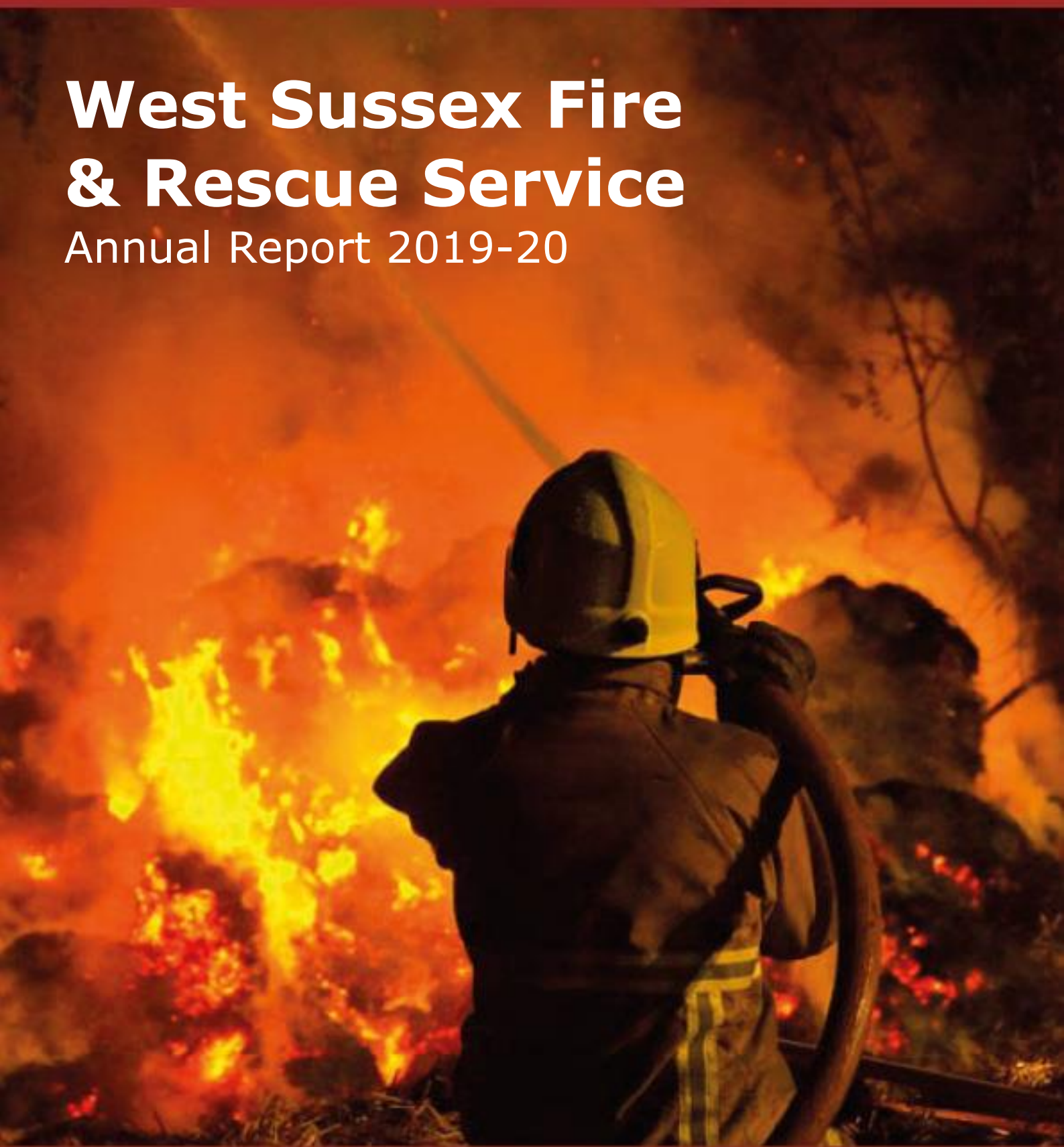


West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service

Annual Report 2019-20



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Foreword

Welcome to the 2019/2020 West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service Annual Report.

This report tells you about what the fire service did last year, including the overall performance and some of the main highlights of their work.



This report covers the financial year from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. The report can be found on the West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service (WSFRS)

section of the West Sussex County Council (WSCC) website as well as the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2018-22 and supporting strategies.

This year's Annual Report sees us moving forward with a new Chief Fire Officer, Sabrina Cohen-Hatton. Sabrina joined West Sussex in September 2019 and is helping to navigate us successfully through a challenging period following the publication of our first inspection report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services in June 2019 which identified our areas for improvement. The West Sussex Fire and Rescue Authority is committed to the core purpose of providing our communities with sustainable, high quality firefighting, rescue and preventative services, and I want to thank all our staff who continue to work with great professionalism and dedication to help achieve this. The achievements from last year are clear evidence of this dedication.

Duncan Crow
Cabinet Member for Fire & Rescue and Communities

Introduction

Our people are at the heart of our fire and rescue service. I cannot thank our staff enough for their continued courage, effort and dedication. We are proud to serve the people of West Sussex. We are committed to saving, protecting and improving the lives of people in our county.

We will continually challenge ourselves and our practices to improve our service and make



a difference to people's lives. The inspection report of our service published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services in 2019 identified our areas for improvement. We welcomed these findings so that we can improve our service and the impact that we can have. We know we have a lot to do, but we have a clear plan in place. I also want to note that in their follow up visit this year inspectors said we had made 'tangible improvements'.

We enjoy putting together our annual report as it gives us the chance to reflect on the accomplishments of our talented staff and to share it with you. In addition to this Annual Report, our Statement of Assurance for 2019-20 provides more details on our finances and performance.

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

The community we serve

West Sussex is home to almost 859,000 people.

The four largest towns are Crawley, Horsham, Worthing and Bognor Regis. 21.3% of the county's population and 30% of businesses are in rural areas.

Arun District has the highest proportion of residents with 19%, while Adur, the smallest district, has the lowest, at less than 8%.

Over 506,000 people, around 59% of West Sussex population are of working age (16-64yrs). Almost 196,000 (23%) of the county population are 65 or over.

The county is the second most wooded in the UK – 19% woodland compared to the national average 9%.

West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service's headquarters, as well as that of West Sussex County Council, are based at County Hall in Chichester.

The county includes part of the South Downs National Park and coastal areas.

It has several stately homes, including Goodwood, Petworth House and Uppark House, alongside Arundel Castle and Bramber Castle.

More than half of our county is protected countryside, including the South Downs National Park. In addition, large areas of the county are designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

As well as major road and rail links, Gatwick Airport, which has over 46 million passengers each year, is also located in the county.

West Sussex covers 768 square miles, incorporating coastal strips in the south,

Gatwick Airport in the north-east of the county and significant rural area in between.

While West Sussex generally has a strong performing economy, there are pockets of deprivation notably in some of the coastal districts and in Crawley.

Employment rates in West Sussex are above the regional and national average, with around 426,000 economically active residents of working age. Around 71% of workers are full time and around a third of jobs in the county are in the health sector, retail or business administration and support services. Self-employment rates in West Sussex are 13.4% and above the average for both the South East and nationally, being particularly high in the more rural districts of Chichester and Horsham. The highest proportion of businesses are in the professional, scientific and technical sectors.

Average weekly earnings in West Sussex are above the national average but lower than the regional average, with higher earners working in Chichester and Crawley. West Sussex is a small firm economy with around 85% employing fewer than 10 people, though Crawley has one of the higher proportions of large businesses with over 250 or more employees.

West Sussex remains a desirable place to live and the average house price in the county is £328,196. This is above both the national (England) and regional average. In addition, the ratio of house price to earnings is higher in West Sussex than the regional and national average, with a range of variation across the county.

Much of the rural part of West Sussex includes the areas that lie within the South Downs National Park and two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The South Downs National Park is the most visited national park in the country. The attractiveness of the county, as well as

visitor attractions and the location on the south coast, result in leisure and tourism being an important sector for West Sussex.

Integrated Risk Management Plan

Our current Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) runs from 2018 to 2022. Over the past two years the plan has been adopted and we have been developing action plans around the priorities.

To help us deliver the IRMP action plans and 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. The role of this Board is to provide support, monitor progress, and make recommendations that will enable Fire Programmes to be delivered to time, cost and quality requirements and ultimately drive the delivery of the change identified in our action plans.

Strategies have been developed for the following:

- Fire Safety Enforcement Strategy 2020-2022
- Customer Centred Value for Money Strategy 2018-2022
- Integration and Collaboration Strategy 2018-2022
- People and Culture Strategy
- Prevention Strategy 2019-2022
- Service Delivery Strategy 2018-2022

A review is being undertaken. You can read more here under 'Other internal reports': www.westsussex.gov.uk/fire-emergencies-and-crime/west-sussex-fire-and-rescue-service/performance-plans-and-reports/fire-rescue-service-reports

We will continue to measure our progress in these boards against project and programme milestones as well using our key performance indicators to measure success.

To view the full IRMP visit www.westsussex.gov.uk/fire-emergencies-and-crime/west-sussex-fire-and-rescue-service/performance-plans-and-reports/fire-rescue-service-integrated-risk-management-plan

Protection

During this year Business Fire Safety has restructured to align resources better to the risk identified in both the IRMP and RBIP. This has increased the establishment by eight people in dedicated fire safety posts, following significant investment from WSCC. In February 2020 Protection was revisited by the HMICFRS who reported in letter that all the concerns from their 2018 Inspection had now been addressed and good progress had been made.

The department name has changed from Business Fire Safety to 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.

Following the restructure, we continued our inspections as part of our risk-based inspection programme, targeting those premises most at risk. These included care homes, high risk residential buildings, licenced premises and other high-risk public

spaces and events with large numbers of people.

As part of the risk-based inspection programme we carried out 1,391 audits of which 259 resulted in notices being issued. We also cleared the audit backlog which had been created as a result of the positive work to make residential buildings safer following the Grenfell tragedy and our commitment to work with high risk residential buildings. Initial planning for the next phase of the national Building Risk Review has also been completed and this work will commence in Summer 2020.

Sleeping accommodation remains a priority, working closely with the residents and the 'responsible person' for high-rise residential blocks. As such, we successfully oversaw the removal of high-risk cladding panels systems from a large hotel and a high-rise residential block. We continue to work with another 80 high-rise residential blocks to directly support the work of the National Protection Board in addressing Grenfell-like risks and ensuring the safety of residents. We then make sure that this key information is available to responding fire crews through the computer in the cab of the fire engines, known as a Mobile Data Terminal.

We responded to 185 referrals to fire safety concerns from business partners and members of the public. All referrals are immediately risk assessed and often receive an immediate response from a fire safety officer. Where immediate action was required in some of these establishments, we issued 8 prohibition notices. This resulted in one prosecution being heard and four further prosecutions are currently going through the legal process for breaches of fire safety legislation.

Enforcement notices were issued to establishments including restaurants, takeaways and residential flats. The team

also received 363 general fire safety enquiries during the year.



We assessed 2,110 planning applications during this year looking at the provision of water supplies and access for fire engines in case of an incident. These were examined and commented upon to ensure new buildings, or changes to existing building infrastructure, provided the required facilities. In addition, 5,246 hydrant inspections were carried out and 102 hydrant defects were identified and repaired.

With the continual changes to building infrastructure in the county, 694 statutory building consultations were examined and commented upon. Additionally, 619 licensing applications were received, reviewed and assessed to ensure fire safety standards were satisfactory. This also included licences for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO).

This represents a 57% increase in licencing consultations from the previous year.

Low level tier 1 fire investigations were carried out at all fires by operational crews. However, 18 fires required a full tier 2 investigation by our specialist fire investigators. The fire investigators worked alongside police and community teams to reduce fire risk or support police with arson prosecutions and to learn the causes of fires so they can be prevented in the future. This is a reduction of 47% in part due to our increased protection and prevention activities.

Prevention

The prevention work that we carry out is designed to reduce the number of incidents and their impact. It reduces loss of life, enables us to identify vulnerable residents who require additional support and can reduce the level of risk that our firefighters are exposed to.

Our prevention activity is focused on those who have a high level of fire risk and may have a limited ability to respond safely in a fire situation. This can include the elderly and people with mental or physical health issues.

So much of our prevention work is built around partnerships and the sharing of knowledge and intelligence. Our partners provide subject matter expertise in their specific fields and data to help us identify where there is the greatest level of community risk. The WSCC Communications and Engagement team play a crucial role in the delivery of our prevention work through the promotion and distribution of our safety messages as well as creating material to use in our safety campaigns

In the year ending March 2020, our operational crews and Community Fire

Safety Officers carried out 4,699 high priority Safe and Well Visits, to those deemed most at risk.

As part of a Safe and Well Visit our staff install smoke detectors and where there is a very high level of fire risk and risk of personal harm or loss of life, we recommend residents consider a linked smoke detector as part of a telecare package. When we meet residents, who have needs that we are unable to assist them with we make a referral to one of our partners for additional support.

During the 4,699 Safe and Well Visits we:

- Installed 2,635 ten-year smoke alarms
- Provided 1,940 telecare linked smoke alarms
- Distributed 153 deaf alarm systems
- Supported 47 domestic violence cases with specialist equipment and advice
- Provided 854 other items of detection and protection equipment, which includes fire aprons or blankets for vulnerable smokers with limited mobility

As a result, 4,699 homes are now safer, with early warning of a fire and tailored fire safety advice. The residents will now be aware of how they can reduce the likelihood of fire in their home and what to do in the event of one. At each visit we leave the resident with a booklet packed with fire safety advice as well as other information e.g., falls prevention, support to quit smoking, avoidance of scams and how to prepare for an emergency provided by our partner agencies along with their contact numbers.

The tele-linked smoke detectors are a vital lifeline protecting some of our most vulnerable residents with disabilities and or medical conditions, those who may be unaware that there is a fire or able to move

themselves to a place of safety. We are mobilised via the telecare call centre without the resident having to make the call, which on 33 occasions resulted in reduction in damage to someone's home and harm to the resident and on three occasions saved someone's life.

Community Fire Safety Officers, or local crews, will often return to a property after an incident to offer additional advice and support, and to help residents consider how the risk of future incidents can be reduced.

Being a trusted organisation gives us more open access to some individuals. To ensure we can provide the most appropriate help, our staff have been given safeguarding training to help them identify a wide range of issues.

Where required, we can refer people to other organisations we work with, or other relevant departments within WSCC. Last year we raised safeguarding concerns about more than 71 people and referred 642 individuals to other services or sources of support. Referrals were made to Carepoint, occupational therapy, telecare providers, the Prevention Assessment Team and local Wellbeing Hubs to support people with their care needs and for Attendance Allowance and Carer's Allowance, Winter Warmth to support them with their financial needs.

As part of our safeguarding responsibility we attend the Adult's Safeguarding Board and work closely with the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements and Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences where there is an identified fire risk.

Public Health colleagues have provided advice and content for the information we leave with residents when undertaking Safe and Well Visits for example information on falls prevention, smoking cessation and the five ways to wellbeing. They have also

provided advice on healthy eating, which has been included in our programmes of work for children and young people.

We carried out drop-in events to deliver safety measures to wider audiences. These included testing 328 electric blankets last year, which found 70 of them to be unsafe. The unsafe blankets were withdrawn from use and with the owners' permission disposed of, enabling the resident to sleep safely at night by preventing a potentially devastating fire in their home.

We are in a privileged position when we visit someone's home to undertake a Safe and Well Visit. We very often get to meet people who are shut away from the world in their personal struggle without any support. It's at times like this that we take the opportunity to carry out small acts of kindness which can make such a huge difference to someone's quality of life. During a Safe and Well Visit to a resident who had recently been discharged from hospital with a life limiting illness it became apparent that not only did they need a linked smoke detector they also had other needs. They were struggling financially, struggling to cook and their broadband connection was down. Our officer was able to put them in touch with the meals on wheels service, benefits support and quite quickly and easily fix the broadband issue. As a result of the visit not only had we helped reduce their fire risk, we had also reconnected them back with the outside world.

On another occasion when one of our firefighters visited a resident to carry out a visit, he noticed how cold they felt when he shook their hand. The coldness alerted him to the fact that all was not well. It became apparent that the resident was struggling with their mental health and taking care of them self. Having provided the resident with fire safety advice the firefighter was also able to recommend some partner agencies

who could offer support and assist them with getting social care.

Work with children and young people

We play a valuable role teaching children about fire prevention and road safety, from primary school age upwards.

We use specialist learning materials to ensure that we engage with children at the most appropriate level and can communicate information in a format they will be able to retain and share with others.

Last year we had contact with 16,186 pupils during 245 School Education Visits. We also saw 2,499 pupils through Junior Citizen events across the county. During Junior Citizens we work alongside several of our partner organisations, Sussex Police, Royal National Lifeboat Institution, Junior Neighbourhood Watch, Magistrates in the Community, Bike Ability and Sussex Community Rail Partnership to deliver interactive sessions on a variety of subjects, the children learnt how to keep themselves and others safe, and how to become good citizens in our communities.



Firefighters can be positive role models for young people. We work in partnership with a number of organisations such as schools, local community safety teams, Sussex Police

and Alternative Provision Colleges to discourage anti-social behaviour and last year 41 children were referred to our Firewise programme, which helps young people understand the potential consequences of experimenting with fires.

We also ran FireBreak, in partnership with county council colleagues from Youth Services and schools. It is aimed at young people aged between 12 and 14, and actively encourages students to become positive role models within their communities.

Students attended a fire station over five consecutive days, working alongside uniformed firefighters on a structured programme of events that combine classroom-based activities and practical training to promote teamwork, social awareness, self-discipline and to help reduce negative influences.

The course provides skills and experiences that will help support young people as they prepare to enter the world of work. In addition, it gives an insight into a career in the fire and rescue service and presents West Sussex County Council as an employer of choice.

We ran six of these courses during the year, working with a total of 65 students, including a tailor-made course for a special needs school. Sessions included crime and consequence delivered by a Police officer and water safety delivered by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

Not only did 65 students receive a lifesaving Heartstart qualification, feedback from parents and teachers noted that students were more engaged, more confident and had made significant personal achievements, for some it was 100% attendance, for others it was conquering a fear of heights or forming new friendships.

Community Volunteers

Our Community Volunteers have played a vital part in being able to offer advice and information to help keep our communities safe and engage with our residents. Volunteers provide connections and local insight into their home communities assist with the transfer of fire and road safety messages to their personal networks.

The volunteers have generously given over 1,100 hours of their time to support our community-based activity. They supported the operational crews at various community events across the county, including the 'Tea and Tips' events held at Chichester, Littlehampton, East Preston and Hassocks to mark 'Older Persons Day' and prevent social isolation. They also supported the operational crews with campaigns such as kitchen safety, electrical safety and Christmas drink drive.

Some of our volunteers were trained in the use of the virtual reality headsets and attended freshers fairs to provide road safety advice and give the students the experience of being in a virtual road traffic collision.

Volunteers supported electric blanket testing dates. They performed a crucial role in helping the days run smoothly by signing attendees in, directing them where to go and providing fire safety advice and other useful information to those waiting.

There have been many other occasions where the volunteers have made an extremely valuable contribution these include station open days, Safe Drive Stay Alive, Junior Citizens and Biker Down as well as performing a ceremonial function at official WSFRS events.

Towards the end of 2019, volunteers took part in several engagement sessions across the county, aimed reviewing the existing

volunteer programme. Their feedback was crucial in starting to shape what the Community Volunteers will look like going forward. We have created an action plan to further develop this area of our work. We would like to encourage more people to join us as a volunteer and intend to broaden the role.

Road Safety

We deal with the consequences of road traffic collisions on a daily basis. We work closely with our national and regional partners to do everything we can to reduce the number, and severity, of such incidents.

One of our key road safety collaborations is the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership (SSRP), a partnership which includes Brighton & Hove City Council, East and West Sussex County Councils, Highways England, East and West Sussex Fire and Rescue Services and Sussex Police.

All of the organisations in the SSRP work together to help make the roads of Sussex safer and, since April 2015, the SSRP has been fully funded using some of the speed awareness course fees, where drivers detected speeding are offered the opportunity to take an educational course rather than have a penalty fine and points on their driving licence.

Road Traffic Collisions

Over the course of last year there were 1,961 reported road traffic collisions (RTCs). Sadly 29 people lost their lives, 591 people were seriously injured and a further 1,998 people suffered slight injuries.

More information can be found following this link: www.westsussex.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/road-safety/road-accidents-and-casualty-data/

We are not asked to attend all collisions, but we were called to 516 incidents last year and carried out work to rescue casualties 70 times.

We work hard with a number of partners to try to reduce this number through initiatives such as Safe Drive Stay Alive.

Working with young road users

Almost 7,250 young people from local schools and colleges attended our hard-hitting road show Safe Drive Stay Alive. Sadly, the final show of the 2019/20 season had to be postponed due to COVID-19. The show is delivered in partnership with staff from Sussex Police, South East Coast Ambulance (SECamb), NHS and seriously injured victims, as well as relatives of those who have been killed on our roads.

It brings to life difficult messages to make young people aware of their responsibilities as new or potential drivers, or as passengers travelling with their friends, and of the devastating consequences that can occur otherwise.

We also engaged with 95 motorcyclists through our Biker Down programme, which promotes rider safety at events across the county and helps make motorcyclists aware of what to do in the event of a collision, as well as the courses and advice available to them. This is delivered in partnership with the Sussex Police.

Advice and information for all drivers can be found on the SSRP website www.sussexsaferoads.gov.uk.

Response

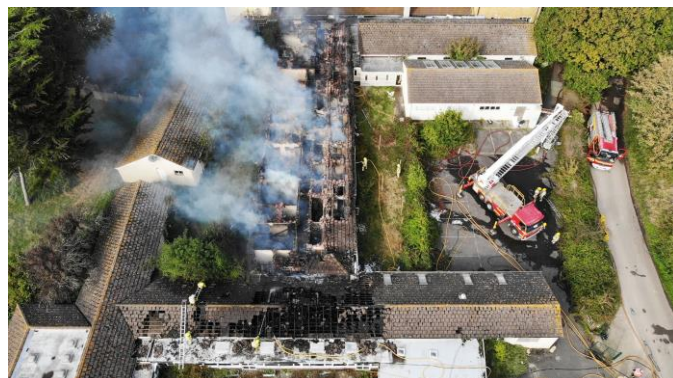
We will work every day with our communities and partners to prevent emergencies, make people safer and improve lives in West Sussex. Emergencies

happen and when they do, we will be ready to respond professionally and as quickly as possible in order to help people and save lives.

The Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2018-22 sets out the Fire Authority's risk assessment for fires and rescues in West Sussex and outlines how we are equipped to deal with the risks and incidents identified in the IRMP.

These risks include building fires and road traffic collisions which are directly covered in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. As well as other incident types such as animal rescues and flood responses which are discretionary for the Fire Authority.

We send the quickest fire engine to every incident, this being the fire engine that can get there before any other fire engine. This means on some occasions a fire engine from another service will be the first on scene as we operate on borderless mobilising with neighbouring services.



For each incident type we know how many firefighters and what equipment will be needed to initially resolve incidents, we ensure we send this in what we call a 'Pre-Determined Attendance'

Speed and weight of attack are important however, the quality of work on scene is also critical to how well we resolve an incident. We work hard to ensure our crews are well

trained and well equipped. We also ensure that the people who have the responsibility for being in charge of an incident are well supported with tactical advice and specialist support where required.



We utilise a number of different crewing systems across the service to provide twenty four hour operational cover, seven days a week, three hundred and sixty five days a year to our communities, the type of crewing system used will be based on the risk and demand in each geographical area.

We have eight immediate response, wholtime crewed fire engines 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 wholtime firefighters working from 7am until 7pm, from Monday to Friday, at Shoreham, Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath and East Grinstead.

Many of our fire stations are crewed by part time Retained Duty System (RDS) firefighters who provide an agreed amount of cover 'on-call' via a pager system and respond to their station when there is an incident. We use RDS firefighters at 23 of our 25 fire stations, 14 of which are crewed entirely by on-call employees. There are a

number of challenges in maintaining the availability of our RDS appliances, changes to the way we live, and the demands placed upon our time have made it challenging to recruit and retain the number of RDS firefighters that we need.

We have made a number of improvements to increase our RDS availability.

- We have introduced a new Service Delivery Centre to support and coordinate the use of our Wholtime and RDS staff. This allows us to maximise the availability of our appliances and to respond as quickly as possible to incidents by having more appliances available and ready to respond.
- We have also introduced three additional Retained Liaison Officers (RLOs) to support our retained managers. Our Retained Unit Leaders have to balance their managerial responsibilities with their full-time employment. The RLOs provide additional support to these managers and their stations with retention and recruitment activity, additional managerial support and they also provide operational cover across West Sussex as qualified incident commanders. This further supports and contributes to the availability of our RDS appliances and the day to day management of our RDS stations.
- We have also introduced 'County Crewing' to maximise RDS availability. This involves redeploying RDS personnel from their home station to other RDS stations to increase the number of RDS appliances that are available. This enables us to attend incidents as quickly as possible across the county.

Keeping our firefighters safe is of paramount importance, we are constantly reviewing and investing in new equipment and techniques to make our firefighters both safer and more effective. These developments are fully supported through quality training programmes developed by our People and Organisational Development team.

- **New fire appliances:** We have completed the procurement of seven new 12 tonne Medium Rescue Pumps (MRP) and have recently taken delivery of the first one. The 12 tonne Volvo MRP is lower, shorter, narrower and has a much smaller turning circle than our 18 tonne Super Rescue Pumps (SRP). This will allow the MRPs to access more roads and be more manoeuvrable in crowded towns and narrow rural roads which will assist us in improving our response times. They will carry new equipment such as a nine-metre main ladder and Ultra High-Pressure Hose Reels, which offer new capabilities that will complement the equipment of our 18 tonne Super Rescue Pumps. This will ensure that at every significant fire the incident commander has a full range of tactical options that will improve our effectiveness in firefighting and rescue operations. These appliances will be located at Worthing, Crawley, Henfield, East Grinstead and Haywards Heath fire stations.



Fog nails: We have introduced this new equipment to compliment the use of our new smoke curtains in support of our enhanced firefighting tactics. 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 the fire can be extinguished more quickly.

Heavy hydraulic rescue equipment: We have upgraded the tools we use to rescue people from large vehicles such as LGV's across our three Heavy Rescue Tenders.

New Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): New firefighting and rescue PPE has been issued to all our staff as part of a national collaboration.

Drone: Our drone is now fully operational and will support our Incident Commanders decision making by providing enhanced situational awareness, particularly at larger and more complex incidents. The drone is operated by our Technical Rescue Unit and specially trained officers.

Enhanced Medical Support Packs: We have upgraded the medical equipment that we carry on our appliances for use by staff with enhanced Immediate Emergency Care (IEC) qualifications. This enables us to provide improved care when first in attendance at operational incidents.

New equipment procurement is based on the lessons learnt from previous incidents. We debrief incidents to ensure that we update training, procedures and equipment to continuously improve how we respond.

Collaboration

Gaining entry: 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 fire and rescue 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. WSFRS 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 in WSFRS.

National Operational Learning and Joint Organisational Learning:

The sharing of notable practice or opportunities for development beyond our immediate service is extremely important. National Organisational Learning (NOL) and Joint Organisational Learning (JOL) platforms enable us to share our learning on a national level within the fire and rescue sector and partner emergency services. Each of these

platforms are assisting emergency services to have an improved shared understanding of risk and how services have overcome these challenges. This promotes the safety and welfare of our communities and personnel.

Operational Assurance

Responding to emergencies is core to our role as a fire and rescue service, where risk is at its highest, and our operational competence must be the very best. A person is operationally competent only when they can apply their skills, knowledge and understanding at operational incidents or in a realistic simulation.

Within the National Occupational Standards (NOS) that apply to fire and rescue services, there is a requirement to implement a quality assurance system.

Such systems ensure:

- we deliver our services to a standard expected of the communities we serve
- our operational staff have the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding in order to fulfil the vast array of operational demands placed upon them
- continuous development of a safe, and competent operational workforce
- that issues are managed and rectified in an appropriate and timely manner.

We implement operational assurance so that an appropriate quality management system is in place. To facilitate this, we undertake regular performance and review of all aspects of our operational performance.

We have carried out 26 multi agency exercises ranging from smaller less complex incident types to larger more protracted scenarios with agencies such South East Coast Ambulance Service, Gatwick Airport and Sussex Police. These exercises also include cross border working with

Hampshire, Surrey and East Sussex Fire and Rescue Services.

We are keen to learn from national learning to ensure we continue to improve our performance at incidents, cope with future changes in the operational environment and continue to provide the best service to the public and improve firefighter safety.

The Joint Fire Control project

In August 2018 the Fire Authority made a decision to start work on a project to assess how we were fulfilling our statutory duty for receiving and acting upon emergency calls for help and present options for our future mobilisation function. The options were presented in January 2019 and approved by the cabinet member.

The chosen option was to enter into a collaboration with Surrey Fire & Rescue Service (SFRS) and demonstrated value for money, the suitability of tried and tested technology and to address the wider IT strategy for the fire and rescue service. WSFRS teamed up with our county IT partners to deliver the project during 2019.

The full statutory duties for mobilisation of West Sussex resources were passed to SFRS, this included a new personnel asset management system that was implemented with enhanced resilience and functionality including a full interface to automate the availability of firefighters and fire engines. This system frees up control operators to carry out essential mobilising operations and streamlines the end user experience. As part of the wider IT strategy the team improved firefighter safety, the service introduced new computers in the cabs of fire engines, the computers hold critical safety information on risks within the county that are now shared across both services. We also addressed

improvements in resilience of our IT systems that are linked into the mobilisation systems and improved the way we track our officers and dynamically mobilise them making our officer resource more effective. Other new systems included how we report on fires to the Home Office. We work to continue the collaboration with SFRS in the alignment of our procedures to improve cross boarder working.

The new control function went live on 4 December 2019 delivering the statutory function on time and within the project budget. This new collaboration will see year on year savings moving forward.

The project team delivered significant benefits to the service in collaboration with SFRS and we continue to develop this collaboration in 2020.

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

HMICFRS inspected WSFRS in the autumn of 2018.

This is the first time that HMICFRS has inspected fire and rescue services across England. Their focus is on the service we provide to the public, and the way we use resources available. 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 report was issued in June 2019 and can be found here: www.westsussex.gov.uk/fire-emergencies-and-crime/west-sussex-fire-and-rescue-service/performance-plans-and-reports/hm-inspectorate-of-constabulary-and-fire-and-rescue-services-hmicfrs-inspection-report/

The service has put in place a robust Improvement Plan which can be found here: <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/fire-emergencies-and-crime/west-sussex-fire-and-rescue-service/performance-plans-and-reports/hm-inspectorate-of-constabulary-and-fire-and-rescue-services-hmicfrs-inspection-report/>

In January 2020 HMICFRS carried out a three-day revisit of West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service.

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 real 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.

Other notable areas seen positively by the reinspection team included governance changes, the Programme Management Office's ability to support driving improvements forward with staff and the establishment of the Independent Advisory Board to support the improvement journey.

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

Incidents of note

Westhampnett

Fire crews were alerted to a fire at Westhampnett Household Waste Recycling

Site at 8.25pm on Tuesday 2 April 2019. On arrival, crews found a developing fire in the main building of the centre. At the height of the fire four fire engines and the aerial ladder platform were at the scene.

During the initial stages of the fire we allowed the fire to burn under control with the fire service in attendance at all times. This incident involved multiple agencies including the Environment Agency, Viridor, West Sussex County Council and local council representation. The controlled burning decision was based on the environmental impact of firefighting water runoff and the risk it may have posed to the local lakes, weather conditions at the time also assisted a controlled burn approach. Residents living nearby were kept informed throughout the fire, advice was given to ensure minimal exposure to smoke, and data from nearby air quality stations was continually monitored.

A couple of weeks later there was a second fire at the site, involving a waste vehicle. This was quickly brought under control. On 4 March 2020 there was another fire at the site involving around 200 tonnes of waste. Firefighters worked quickly to stabilise the fire and managed to save a number of nearby lorries and items of heavy plant from fire. The professional response made by WSFRS and our partners helped to minimise the impact on the environment.



Shell garage fire

At 9.31 on 6 May 2019 Sussex Control Centre received multiple calls to a camper van fire on a petrol forecourt at the Shell service station at Fontwell.

Three appliances from Chichester, Bognor and Worthing along with a water carrier from Petworth were mobilised. Six sets of breathing apparatus, two firefighting jets and one foam jet were used to extinguish the fire.

A cordon remained in place for some time after the fire was extinguished due to residual LPG gas from the auto gas supply. This had a large impact on the A27, with traffic diverted. Officers worked closely with Sussex Police to ensure drivers were aware of the impact and were urged to avoid the area.

The garage remained closed for some time due to extensive damage.



RTC East Wittering

The service received a call to a serious road traffic collision (RTC) at 8.44pm on 31 July 2019, on Bracklesham Lane, Bracklesham, involving four cars with persons trapped and a car on fire.

Crews were faced with multiple casualties and one person still trapped in a car on its side that was on fire with flames beginning to enter the passenger compartment.

The trapped casualty was quickly rescued by crews as a result of decisive and courageous actions by crews the fire was extinguished.

First aid was given to a total of seven casualties by crews, these actions undoubtedly saved further lives.

Firefighters were supported by multiple ambulance crews and the helicopter emergency medical service (HEMS). Sadly, this was a fatal incident and the service carried out many forms of community engagement with those affected by the incident in the days following the crash.

Texaco Garage fire

At 2.12am on 15 September 2019, SCC received a call to a fire at the rear of the Texaco Garage in Copthorne Road, Crawley.

On arrival the crew was faced with a well-developed fire in a garage workshop and requested a further three appliances be mobilised. Due to the challenges with water supplies a further two appliances and two water carriers were requested.

As a result of the structure collapsing crews used one jet, three high pressure hose reels, three ground monitors and two fog nails to contain the fire.

This was a complex incident, but crews worked effectively to extinguish the fire and prevent extensive spread of fire to neighbouring properties.

Bognor fire

At 1.45am on 28 October 2019, the service responded to a fire in Bedford Street at the back of a business property, a fridge retailer.

This fire grew rapidly and spread to the building and resulted in a significant fire loss of the retail shop. At its height there were six fire engines on the scene and the aerial ladder platform (ALP) was also in attendance.

A full range of firefighting techniques was used including fog nails, compressed air foam (CAFs) and using the ALP as a water tower to prevent the fire spreading further.

Haywards Heath College fire

At 1.29pm on 27 January 2020, we were mobilised to a fire in Central Sussex College.

On arrival crews from Haywards Heath were faced with a developing fire in a void behind the external fascia.

The incident commander immediately requested more resources and an Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) this was followed by a further request for resources. In total 10 fire appliances from along with the ALP and the Technical Rescue Unit attended.

Crews extinguished the fire using main jets and fog nails as well as using the ALP and TRU cutting equipment to remove the external fascia to ensure no hidden fire spread in the internal voids. Crews used a wide range of equipment available to them in order to bring this fire under control and prevent further spread to the rest of the building.

Storms Ciara & Dennis

In mid-February 2020 the service responded to several incidents following the outbreaks of Storms Ciara and Dennis.

During Storm Dennis West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service received around 200 flooding-related calls in one 12-hour period.

These varied from flooded properties to people trapped in their vehicles in floodwater.

Firefighters from across the county used specialist water rescue techniques and equipment to assist residents who had become stranded in several different situations to ensure they were brought to safety.



People

Operational Training Team (OTT) are responsible for ensuring we have a safe, competent and well-trained workforce by delivering all operational training requirements.

The team provide a diverse range of training including:

- wholetime and retained recruit initial training
- Breathing apparatus initial and maintenance training
- Incident Command initial and maintenance training
- Emergency Response Driver initial and maintenance training
- Water Rescue initial and maintenance training
- Immediate Emergency Care (Trauma) initial and maintenance training

During 2019-20 282 courses were delivered at WSFRS venues at Worthing and Horley with live fire and specialist training courses facilitated by the OTT at the Fire Service College, Moreton-in-Marsh, Gatwick and Hampshire FRS.



The OTT team are also responsible for the continued review and updating of the 2 yearly Maintenance of Competence programme for firefighters.

A wholetime recruit initial training course took place between September 2019 and November 2019 with 12 new wholetime firefighters successfully passing the course.



This was the second cohort of successful candidates from our Wholetime recruitment campaign held in 2018.

Eight retained (on-call) assessment days were facilitated by People Support. This resulted in four retained (on-call) recruit initial courses for 44 new starters.

During 2019-20, the service retention rate improved compared to last year's data with the main reason for wholetime leavers being retirement and retained (on-call) being personal circumstances.

One Public Estate



One Public Estate (OPE) is a national programme, jointly managed by the Cabinet Office, MHCLG and the Local Government Association, which brings public sector organisations together. By working in partnership, we can look at how we can use our land and buildings collaboratively to:

- Improve public services to residents, visitors, employees and businesses in the county.
- Renew and rationalise the public estate so there is a reduction in the amount of money we spend on buildings.
- Free up much needed land for the development of housing, commercial and employment space.
- Support local economic growth.
- Generate capital receipts and income.

WSFRS has established clear principles to inform and guide the design and development of new FRS facilities including:

Operational

- Stations are located in appropriate places to optimise emergency response, minimise response times and add value to their communities.
- Stations provide a great working environment that encourages recruitment and retention, supports diversity and inclusion and the wellbeing of staff.

- FRS working environments encourage and support cultural and behavioural change.
- Our buildings are smarter, more flexible, modern, and sustainable, supporting service improvement and able to adapt to changing service demands.
- The FRS estate provides training facilities that meet the needs of a modern fire service.

Estate

- Increased value from estate, through sharing of sites, co-location/integration with other services, additional development.
- Sustainable buildings that are cheaper and easier to maintain/run.

Partnership

- Supports collaboration with blue-light services and other agencies.
- Contribution to delivery of partnership outcomes through One Public Estate and other partnership-delivered initiatives.
- Proactive engagement and co-operation with partner organisations within local communities.
- Economies of scale with associated savings and efficiencies through joint development/occupation.

Horsham Fire Station and Training Facility:

WSCC are currently engaged in delivery of a new Fire Station and Training Centre at Highwood, Horsham. (Update September 2020: Funding was agreed at Cabinet for this project).

The project responds to risks identified within the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2018-2022.

In addition, the recent HMICFRS report identified areas for improvement aligned with items within the IRMP, such as: diversity and inclusion, firefighter skills, recruitment and retention and ensuring the adequacy of the WSFRS estate.

Fire and Rescue Services training and preparedness for dealing with high rise scenarios is also a significant area under national scrutiny and the new facility would provide the training to address this requirement within West Sussex.

The scheme aims to:

- Provide a new operational Fire Station, accommodating whole-time crews, fire appliances and other key teams such as People and Organisational Development (incorporating the training delivery department).
- Provide a new, centralised training centre for the Fire Service to replace the facility at the former Horley fire station and the Worthing site including an upgraded and enhanced training offer with live fire training, incident command and breathing apparatus training.
- Release the Horsham and Horley estates and part of the site at Worthing.

This project was previously approved up to and including the appointment of the main contractor (Willmott Dixon) in October 2019 to complete the design phase works, after a successful tendering process.

The service is currently seeking governance approval in September 2020 to complete the project, including the submission of a planning application, leading to a start on site of construction works around July 2021.

It is anticipated that the construction works will require circa 16 months to complete, with full handover of the facilities around November 2022.

Burgess Hill:

This project will see the redevelopment of several sites within public sector ownership at The Brow.

Proposals include the creation of a new tri-service blue light centre, children's and adults' services, alongside new housing and commercial space to support regeneration in the area, a feasibility report is expected in late summer 2020.

Chichester:

Feasibility funding was awarded in the latest round of OPE funding to explore the potential to relocate and re-provide Chichester Fire Station, potentially alongside other blue-light services.

Initial work on this proposal will start shortly.

Relocation of this station would enable new modern facilities to be provided for WSFRS, and land to be released at Chichester Northgate for new housing, commercial and retail uses as part of the Chichester Vision.

A highways study at the location is being carried out of the Summer of 2020, this will provide key information to understand how the site could be used.

Events of note

As a service we are invited to attend a number of national and local events throughout the year. These include attending the Service of Remembrance in London as well as local services across the country.



Throughout the year our staff undertake several charity events. These include car washes, annual ladder climbs and other events to raise money for local and national causes.



In December 2018, two of our firefighters walked the length of the South Downs Way to raise money for The Fire Fighters Charity and Macmillan. They completed the 100-mile trek over the course of five days.

We hold community open days across the county for the public to come into fire stations, meet the crews and experience what it is like to be a firefighter. We also promote community and fire safety advice.

This year our Wholetime recruits took part in a 24-hour breathing apparatus challenge raising money for the Firefighters Charity, the Kent Surrey & Sussex Air Ambulance and Macmillan. The total amount raised was £1,440.



We also hold our annual Christmas Carol Service at Chichester Cathedral where staff and the public are invited to attend.

In February 2020, a number of our staff attended a celebration of all emergency service workers held by the High Sheriffs of East and West Sussex at Lancing College.



Awards and Medals

Each year the work of our firefighters is honoured with an awards ceremony held at the Baron's Hall in Arundel Castle.

The latest event, which took place in September 2019, saw long service and good conduct (LSGC) medals awarded to wholetime and retained (on-call) firefighters for two decades of outstanding service to their communities. Meritorious medals were given to all staff who had served an incredible 40 years.

Serving firefighters and teams within the service were also singled out for their courage, dedication to the service and selflessness in the last year.

Organisations and partners who have supported the fire service throughout the year were also recognised, alongside volunteers and individuals who contributed to The Fire Fighters Charity.

The event was sponsored by Gatwick Airport.



What people thought about us

We send out a customer feedback survey following fires. Overall, 99% of respondents were satisfied with the way the fire service dealt with their incident and 94% of respondents were very satisfied with our service.

The comments received included:

“Control of the situation – quick response - sympathetic in dealing with me at a very stressful time.”

“The officers were very knowledgeable and professional. Answered any questions we raised.”

“Managed to get us back in the building and up and running again very quickly. Helpful and friendly.”

“Very grateful. Totally awesome team. Excellent leadership.”

“Calm, awesome, non-judgmental.”

“The speed of arrival, the way they contained the fire to a small area of the kitchen without spoiling the surrounding rooms with water.”

“The team arrived very promptly on Christmas Day evening and were in very good spirits. We were very impressed indeed.”

Contact us

In an emergency you should always dial 999.

To find out more about West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service, please follow the link to our website: www.westsussex.gov.uk/fire

Your views and comments on this Annual Report are very welcome.

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

By email: wsfrs@westsussex.gov.uk

By telephone: 01243 777100

Or write to us at:

West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service
Headquarters
County Hall
Chichester
PO19 1RQ

In addition, members of the community can get involved with our work and receive updates through our Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/wsfrs>) and Twitter ([www.twitter.com/WestSussexFire](https://twitter.com/WestSussexFire)) pages or through their local county councillor.