

# West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service

Annual Statement of Assurance 2022-23



PREVENTION



PROTECTION



SERVICE DELIVERY



PEOPLE



ASSETS

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## Foreword from Cabinet Member for Community Support, Fire and Rescue



Welcome to West Sussex Fire Authority's Statement of Assurance for 2022/2023.

As the Cabinet Member for Community Support, Fire and Rescue, I am pleased to present this document to our local communities, setting out how West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service meets the requirements of the [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#).

The launch of this year's Statement of Assurance also signifies the conclusion of the first year of our new [Community Risk Management Plan 2022 - 2026](#); a plan which sets out the direction of our fire and rescue service over the course of the next four years.

This plan sets out the strategic priorities and the steps that the service is taking to implement new programmes of work, to help ensure that West Sussex continues to be a safe place to live and work.

Keeping residents safe is the highest priority for West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service, and this objective underpins everything the service does.

I am proud of the work that West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service contributes to serve our communities, and I am satisfied that the Fire Authority's financial, governance and operational matters are operating effectively and meet the requirements detailed within the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

**Duncan Crow, Cabinet Member for Community Support, Fire and Rescue**

## Introduction from the Chief Fire Officer

Our annual Statement of Assurance covers the financial year 2022/23 and provides details on our performance, outlining how we manage the budget to provide an efficient and effective service to the residents and visitors of West Sussex.

During this fiscal year we began to emerge from under the cloud of COVID-19 after almost two years of restrictions and lockdowns.

As we began to return to a sense of normality, we faced some of the worst storms in recent years, followed by an exceptionally busy summer of wildfires that took hold of our beautiful and extensive countryside, and a vast amount of winter flooding calls – from premises that had flooded due to the volume of rainfall, and others due to burst pipes from the cold snap.

This Statement of Assurance is significant because it is the first under our new [Community Risk Management Plan](#) and through this plan set five strategic objectives across our People, Protection, Prevention, Service Delivery (formally Response) and Asset areas. These objectives will ensure that we continue to deliver a service which puts public safety at the heart of everything we do, in order to keep our communities safe from harm.

Throughout 2022/23 our improvement journey continued at great pace too, with the service's progress formally recognised in the [latest inspection report](#) from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services.

Steady progress was also made at the site of our new Horsham Fire Station and Training Centre, and the state-of-the-art facilities have been designed to place a real emphasis on the continued development of our staff.

The last 12 months have seen West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service demonstrate its ability to deliver services that benefit the community, and our teams will continue to deliver the service West Sussex expects and deserves.

**Sabrina Cohen-Hatton, Chief Fire Officer**



## Community Risk Management Plan

It is a statutory requirement that all fire and rescue authorities produce a [Community Risk Management Plan](#) (CRMP). The plan identifies the risks present in our communities for those who live, work, visit and travel in West Sussex.



The plan is owned by the Fire and Rescue Authority and is delivered by WSFRS. The plan sets out how we address all foreseeable risk across our county and also provides an overview of what influences our service in terms of our national and local obligations. We will always seek to be efficient and effective and to achieve good value for the local community. This means working collaboratively with neighbouring fire and rescue services and other blue light services as well as by maximising our position within WSCC by actively participating in partnership opportunities including tackling the social causes of fire and other emergencies.

## 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 CRMP.

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 Fire Authority and its fire and rescue service delivered the requirements contained in the National Fire and Rescue Framework and the authority's CRMP during 2022/2023.

The West Sussex Fire & Rescue Authority set strategic priorities for the period of 2022-26 based on thorough risk analysis.

**Strategic Priority 1:** Preventing fires and emergencies from happening.

**Strategic Priority 2:** Protecting people, firefighters and property by making buildings as safe from fire as they can be.

**Strategic Priority 3:** Responding to fires and emergencies quickly and effectively.

**Strategic Priority 4:** Have a safe and valued workforce.

**Strategic Priority 5:** Making best use of resources.

Where there are competing priorities, we will focus resources on the area of greatest need. At times this may mean that the order in which we do things is subject to change. This report will look at each area of our service delivery; Protection, Prevention, Service Delivery, Strategic Risk and People and then summarise the progress against the five strategic priorities through projects.

## Governance

West Sussex County Council (WSCC) is the Fire Authority for West Sussex Fire & 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

WSCC 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. Full Council is the Fire Authority and has delegated executive powers of the Fire and Rescue Authority to the Cabinet.

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 as the full council, and they are responsible for deciding some of the overall policies and setting the budget each year.

The Constitution provides a clear separation between the operational decision-making responsibility of our fire and rescue service, the executive policy setting and scrutiny and role of county councillors.

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 Community Support, Fire and Rescue. The cabinet member for WSFRS is Councillor Duncan Crow. Decisions relating to the fire and rescue service and transformation plans of the service are endorsed by the cabinet member and subject to scrutiny by the Fire & Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee which was established at the full meeting of the County Council on 17 December 2019.

Key decisions (a decision that amounts to over £500,000 in value or significantly affects more than one division) about the service can be taken by the Cabinet Member for Community Support, Fire and Rescue, the relevant fire officer, public Cabinet or at a Full Council meeting.

The council's Cabinet, the FRS Scrutiny Committee and Full Council meet in public as a demonstration of accountability to the residents of West Sussex. These meetings can be attended in person or viewed via the council's website. As a fire

authority the fire and rescue service is linked to a range of the council's 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.

## Service Executive Board

Our Service Executive board is made up of our three Principal Officers, supported by strategic advisors from Organisational Assurance & Governance as well as West Sussex County Council corporate functions representatives from HR and Finance.

Chief Fire Officer Sabrina Cohen-Hatton  
Deputy Chief Fire Officer Mark Andrews  
Assistant Chief Fire Officer Peter Rickard

Strategic Advisors to Service Executive Board:

Senior Finance Business Partner  
Head of Organisational Assurance & Governance  
Senior Human Resources Business Partner



## His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

In September 2021 HMICFRS undertook their second round of full national inspections and again visited the service. Following the services inspection, HMICFRS acknowledged in the report published on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2022:

"We were pleased to see that the service has made progress since our 2018 inspection. For example, it has used increased funding to expand its prevention and protection teams. We no longer have causes of concern about how these teams carry out aspects of their work."

HMICFRS also acknowledged improvements in how the service responds to incidents, how efficient it is becoming and how we anticipate workforce planning by forecasting retirements and the number of staff we need to recruit. This second round of inspection recognised an improvement and rated the service as 'requires improvement'.

WSFRS remains committed to tackling areas of bullying, harassment and discrimination of which HMICFRS have identified nationally within the fire sector. As part of our People Service Plan the service has implemented a mandatory Leadership and Culture Framework for all staff. The framework delivers several workshops to support cultural transformation and promote equality, diversity and inclusion, coaching skills, our values and behaviours, as well as the NFCC Code of Ethics - all of which are embedded into staff's performance reviews.

WSFRS remains committed to maintaining and improving the services that our communities, businesses, customers and partners depend on so heavily.

HMICFRS have now started their third round of inspections and will be visiting WSFRS as part of this programme late in financial year 2023/24. We look forward to welcoming them into our service.



# Financial Performance Report 2022/23

How your money is spent

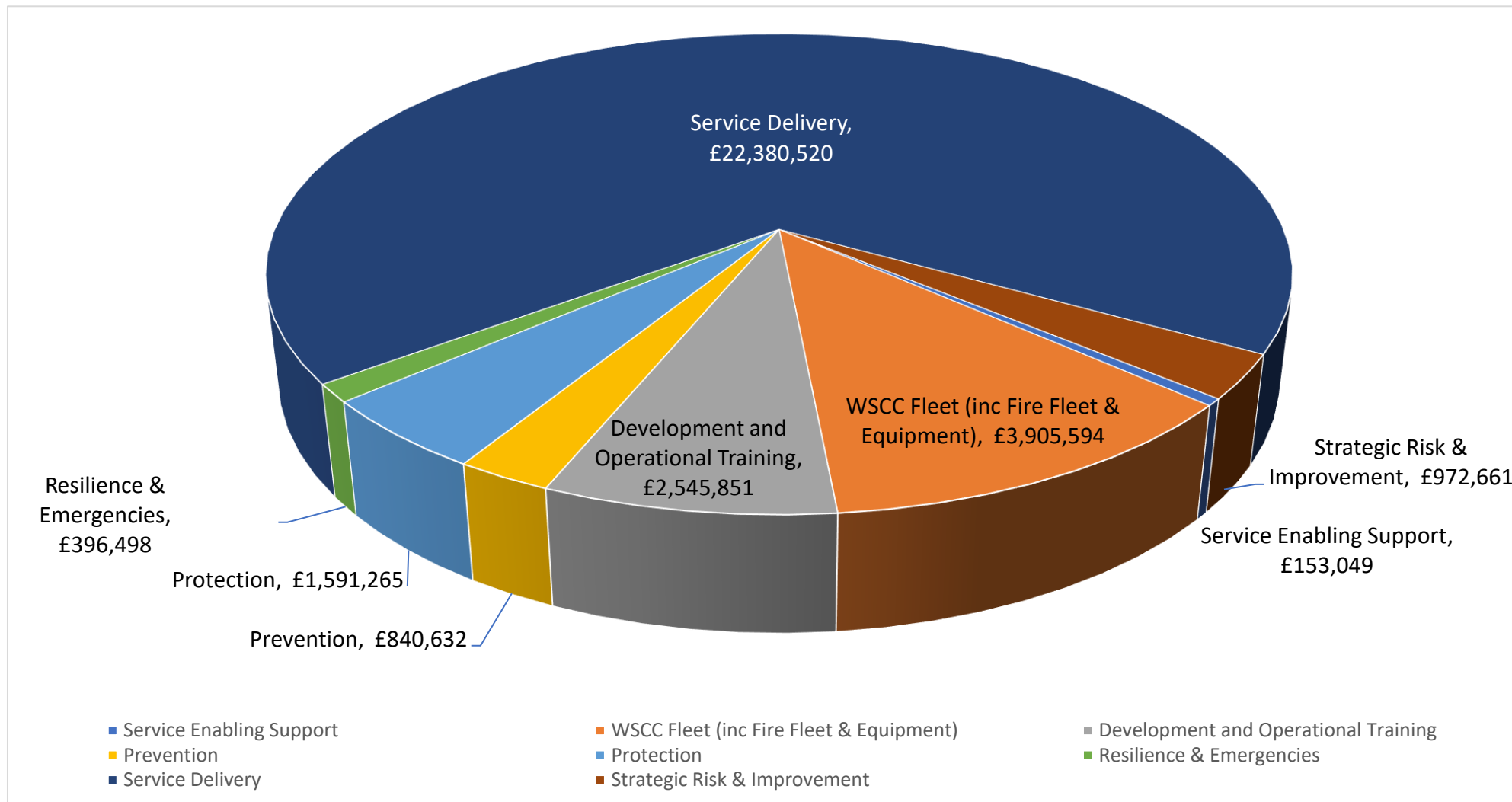


Figure 1 – FRS Expenditure 2022-23

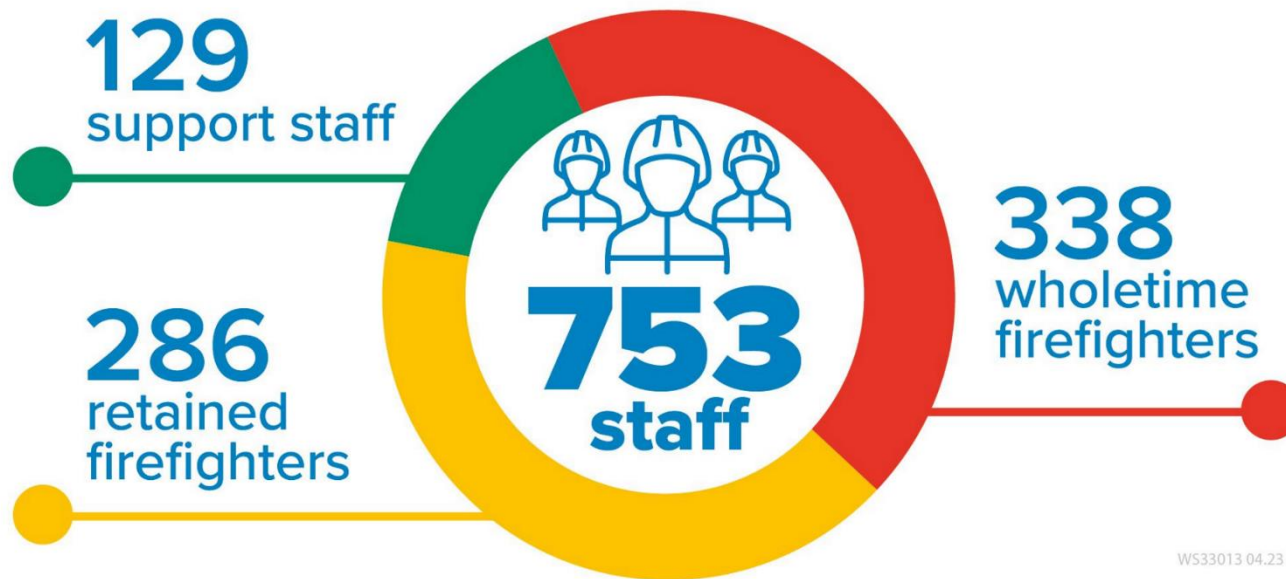
## Our People

At the end of March 2023 our workforce total of 753 included a total of 338 wholetime firefighters, 286 on-call (retained) firefighters and 129 support staff working for WSFRS.

There has been significant focus through our scrutiny on our diversity within service workforce recruitment. The progress is monitored regularly and we are now seeing the representation of this within our data.

The applications for wholetime firefighters in 2016 were 91% Male, 9% Female, which in contrast to our most recent process in 2020/21 had moved to 81% Male, 16% Female and 2% would prefer not to say.

The ethnicity of applicants in 2016 was 95% White and 5% across Asian, Black, Chinese, mixed and prefer not to say. In 2021 this had moved to 91% White and increased to 9% across the other ethnicities which shows progress in both areas over the last five years, albeit a small increase.



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## Performance Assurance Framework

Our Performance and Assurance Framework (PAF) provides structure and governance arrangements to ensure that the statutory obligations, functions and strategic commitments of the service are being suitably scrutinised and delivered. As part of the [Our Council Plan](#) we ensured a clear link to our PAF with four key measures highlighted to provide assurance. This golden thread continues through our core performance measures and through to service objectives into team plans and individual performance objectives.

### Keeping people safe from vulnerable situations.

OUTCOME - A timely and proportionate approach to prevention through fire safety inspections of business premises

OUTCOME – Support to people when they need it through Safe & Well Visits to those at highest risk

	22/23 Target	Performance
Number of Safe & Well Visits delivered to those at highest risk	4000	4680
Fire safety inspections of business premises (as determined by the Risk Based Inspection Programme) carried out per year	1000	1004

### Helping people and communities to fulfil their potential.

OUTCOME - Safe and connected and cohesive communities measured through first appliance attendance to both critical fires and critical special service incidents.

	22/23 Target	Performance
Percentage of critical fires where the first appliance in attendance meets our emergency response standard	89%	89.1%
Percentage of critical special service incidents where the first appliance in attendance meets our emergency response standard	80%	81.3%

A critical incident is defined as one that is likely to involve a significant threat to life, structures or the environment. The PAF examines performance on a quarterly basis across the four elements of service provision, corporate health, priority programmes and risk through a suite of core and service measures. In the reporting year 2022-23, we tracked the performance of 29 core measures against quarterly and end of year targets (detailed in Appendix A). These core measures are subject to scrutiny at our Strategic Performance Board, Service Executive Board and by the FRS Scrutiny Committee, ensuring organisational aims and objectives are achieved.



## Deputy Chief Fire Officer Annual Review

This year has seen some significant progress against our CRMP, during a period of potential Industrial action and a call for significant sector improvements.

This year’s scrutiny has included updates on our Retained Duty System Task and Finish Group; His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Inspection Report and a report on diversity in recruitment. It also reviewed our performance using our embedded Performance and Assurance Framework quarterly with a positive upward trend on our improvement. At 22/23 year end there were 18 green, five amber and six reds compared with nine green, five amber and 15 reds at the end of 2021-22.

As with any year there are often publications which need to be considered and incorporated into our Community Risk Delivery Plan. This year has seen the publication of several key government publications including a White Paper on reforming our fire and rescue service and more recently the values and culture in fire and rescue services. The related activities have been incorporated into the planning for next year, and where there are areas to be addressed immediately, the appropriate change controls have been put in place.

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) have consulted on and introduced six Fire Standards in 2022/23 bringing a total of 16 new standards by which to align our work. These have now been responded to, reviewed and incorporated into our service plans for 2023/24 as well as reporting embedding into our internal governance.

As detailed in our CRMP there is a clear link to the county council priorities and increased focus on areas that we can support the county council further. As you will read through this year’s report there has been a significant amount of progress throughout the last year which you will see across all five strategic priorities including notably a reduction in accidental dwelling fires; implementation of national fire safety regulations; increased fire cover on our day crewed stations to seven days a week; continuation of work on our leadership programme and embedding of the Code of Ethics and Values; and finally the build of the new state of the art fire station and training centre.



## Progress against our CRMP Strategic Priorities

### Strategic Priority 1: Preventing fires and emergencies from happening

#### ***1.1 Place the public and communities at the centre of our activities.***

Our community fire safety officers and firefighters deliver Safe & Well Visits to those with the highest level of fire risk. Visits are a vital part of how we reduce incidents and protect people from fire in their home. We provide fire safety advice and equipment as well as health and wellbeing information because our data shows that there is a strong link between poor health and fire risk. Very often we identify people who need additional help to live safely and independently so we signpost and refer them to partner organisations for support. When the need is urgent we work quickly with our partners to safeguard them. In the last year we made 51 safeguarding referrals.

We completed 4680 visits and in addition visited 2245 homes to carry out risk reduction activity such as installing smoke alarms (2456) and carbon monoxide sensors (1257) and supplying fire safety equipment. For more details about safety in the home please see our webpages on [home fire safety](#).

#### ***1.2 Develop our capacity, through our frontline staff, volunteers and the frontline staff of partner agencies.***

We have been working hard to deliver local community safety activities focusing on where incidents have occurred previously to make sure our safety messages reach those who most need them. We use our serious and fatal fire review procedures to drill down into the human behaviour that contributes to serious and fatal fires, which shapes our communications and safety campaigns.

Volunteers play a significant part in delivering community safety events and engaging with our communities. In 2022 we celebrated 10 years of volunteers and recognised the amazing contribution they all make to our prevention work. They focus on providing information and offering Safe & Well Visits in areas where there is a greater level of risk. If you are interested in joining our incredible team of volunteers, please visit our [Fire & Rescue Service Community Volunteer page](#).







***1.4 Provide school children with fire safety education and deliver programmes so children and young people can make safer decisions and fulfil their potential.***

Our Targeted Education Team delivered a number of new interventions for children and young people, SPARK and IGNITE. We continued to deliver GRIT, including a new tailor-made course especially for children with special educational needs. Along with our operational crews our education instructors visited schools to deliver safety education sessions. Our targeted programmes are designed to develop personal skills and qualities such as resilience and teamwork through a range of activities and experiences.

You can find lots of exciting and informative educational information for children, parents, carers and teachers on [WSFRS's Learning zone](#).

Through our Firewise programme we work with children and young people who play with fire. Providing education on the dangers of playing with fire or using fire inappropriately can significantly reduce the chance of this behaviour continuing.

***1.5 Strengthen and grow our partnerships, working together to keep the individuals and communities safer.***

As a member of the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership (SSRP) we work with the other members, Brighton & Hove City Council, East and West Sussex county councils, Highways England, East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service and Sussex Police to reduce the number of people being killed and seriously injured on our roads.

In 2022/23 we attended 516 RTCs and carried out 66 extrications.

For more information visit our [road safety webpage](#).



## Strategic Priority 2: Protecting people, firefighters and property by making buildings as safe from fire as they can be

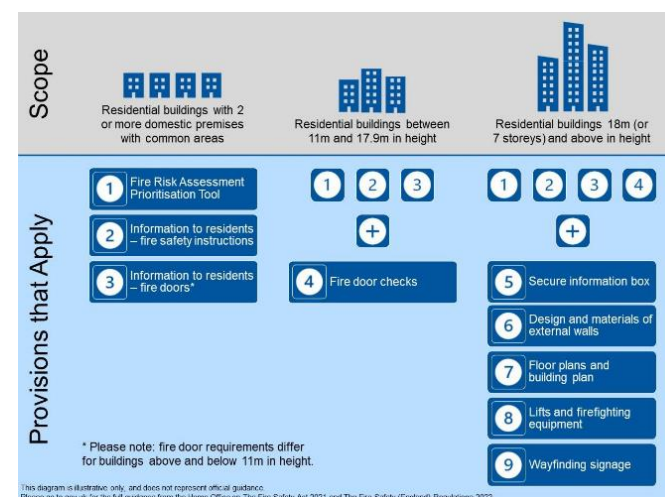
2022/2023 has been an extremely exciting year for the Protection department with the commencement of several new pieces of fire safety legislation directly linked to the ongoing response to address the outcomes of the Grenfell Tower tragedy in 2017.

This has included the Fire Safety Act 2021 and the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, the latter of which has required WSFRS to set up [a portal on our website](#) to enable the responsible persons (RP) of high-rise residential buildings to submit reports of defects relating to firefighting lifts and other key firefighting facilities such as dry risers and smoke ventilation systems. This enables us to undertake a review of the risk that such defects to these critical systems would pose during a fire, and make appropriate alternate pre-planning arrangements as is necessary, such as increasing the number of fire engines, firefighters and high-reach vehicles that we would mobilise to such an incident. This portal is detailed and advertised through GOV.UK to assist RPs to comply with the legislation.

2022 saw the commencement of our new CRMP, which embedded nine strategic objectives for Protection. We have already delivered three of these objectives;

- Implementation of a call challenge system to not respond to fire alarms in commercial premises.
- Effective working between our Prevention, Protection and Service Delivery teams for an inclusive approach to local risk management.
- Work effectively with other regulators and agencies to reduce risk.

The most significant impact to WSFRS has been the implementation of our Unwanted Fire Signal Policy, which introduced a call challenge and non-attendance procedure in collaboration with our partners in Surrey FRS, so that both services no longer automatically respond to reports of fire alarm actuations in commercial premises. This procedure went live on the 1 December 2022 and had an immediate effect on the number of unwanted fire signals we attended, which were down 75% on the previous month. This reduction has allowed our fire crews to spend more time undertaking training to maintain their operational competences, focusing on risk reduction activities such as assisting those that are most vulnerable within our communities, and undertaking fire safety checks in simple premises which has been made possible following the





delivery of a service-wide training programme delivered by trainers from within the fire protection team. In March 2023 we signed our first [Primary Authority Partnership](#) agreement with Churchill Retirement PLC.

This will enable us to assist Churchill Retirement to continue to meet the requirements placed upon them by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and exceed those minimum standards where appropriate.

It will enable WSFRS to advise our partner on the standards that they should be adopting across their entire property portfolio and is not just restricted to those that are present within West Sussex.

As Churchill provide housing for people that are generally at a higher risk in the event of fire, due to age, infirmity, disability etc, this is a really important partnership that supports WSFRS in protecting some of the more vulnerable people in our communities.



During this year we presented to the FRS Scrutiny Committee on the rationale for reducing the target for number of fire safety audits that we would complete within regulated buildings. This was because we recognised the importance of upskilling our fire safety regulators so that they are qualified in accordance with the national competency framework and to make them more effective for the future. To undertake the necessary courses meant that they would not be available to conduct their normal auditing activities.

To achieve this upskilling, we have made efficient use of a government grant provided to FRSs to enhance the effectiveness of their Protection departments, following the outcomes of the Grenfell Tower fire. This grant is also making it possible to launch a pilot scheme whereby we are investing in our retained colleagues to train a small number to carry out fire safety audits, which will further enhance the effectiveness of our crews within their local communities to further reduce risk.

Within the 2022/23 year we have completed 1004 audits of buildings where the Fire Safety Order 2005 applies, with 175 (data to the end of Q3) being found to have deficiencies in their fire safety management. 20% of these audits have been

undertaken in premises that feature within our Risk Based Inspection Programme, with a further 500 premises receiving a Fire Safety Check conducted by our response crews and our fire safety apprentices.

We have also invested in our fire investigation (FI) capabilities, with more than half of our wholetime supervisory managers having received training to enhance their skills for investigating simple fires.

Three of our specialist FI officers have also had their skills and competencies upgraded to the highest level attainable as we continue to support our fire investigation partnership across the 4Fire partnership of Kent, Surrey, East Sussex and West Sussex. This ensures that the forensic approach that we take to investigate complex scenes supports the police and courts to bring offenders to justice where fires have been set deliberately.

Our FI team also continue to lead the way in sharing information that drives down risk and at a recent inquest aided the Coroner to submit a Regulation 28 letter to the Government with a view to prevent future deaths through the installation of automatic fire sprinklers in extra care facilities.

## Strategic Priority 3: Responding to fires and emergencies quickly and effectively

In 2022, we changed the name of Response to Service Delivery to better reflect the work we do within our communities to reduce risk and keep the public safe. Our firefighters are committed to reducing risk for those most vulnerable in our communities by carrying out prevention activity such as Safe & Well Visits as well as completing fire safety audits to keep businesses safe across West Sussex. Of course, when you need us, we will respond quickly with a safe, competent, and well-trained workforce, to help people and save lives.



As part of [our CRMP](#) we have 10 key priority areas in Service Delivery to focus on within the life cycle of the plan (3.1 to 3.10).

We are proud to have completed two of our committed key priorities within the CRMP within the first year. The first is: 3.7 Enhance day crewed immediate response cover activity 7am - 7pm, seven days a week by extending the current day crewing model at some stations to provide immediate response cover and protection and prevention activity 7am - 7pm, seven days per week with a new flexible crewing model.

We have successfully launched this at Haywards Heath, Burgess Hill, Shoreham, and

East Grinstead fire stations. Our data is telling us that this will demonstrate improved response times to all incidents by 1 minute in Mid Sussex and 34 seconds in Adur. We will now evaluate the impact of our four day crewed fire stations by reviewing the data to assure ourselves and the public we are realising the benefits.

We have also successfully launched our new Local Risk Management Plans (LRMPs) 2023-24 as part of our commitment to key priority 3.4 in service delivery.

Our LRMPs have evolved by working with key partners in our communities and we have made informed decisions to target our resources to risk by using a range of national and local data sets.



This is our first year of our new LRMPs and we will evaluate our outcomes to ensure we are realising the benefits of our work to reduce risk.

As part of our name change to Service Delivery, we took the opportunity to implement further improvements to make our fire station teams more effective and efficient.

We previously had three geographical groups of Western, Central and Eastern where our fire stations teams would be allocated to. We have decided to realign into a new two group structure made up of Eastern and Western groups. This has enabled our station managers to enhance their focus on day-to-day station activity with their teams.

This change has enabled us to introduce a new team called Service Delivery Support. This team now provides the day-to-day support to our Service Delivery teams ensuring we work closer than ever with our partners and departments across the organisation to achieve our LRMP, CRMP objectives and continue our cultural improvement journey.

Our aim is to create empowered, trusted, and high performing teams at WSFRS. Following our two recent HMICFRS reports where we have an open cause of concern relating to promoting the right values and culture. To support our realignment to a two-group structure in Service Delivery we have introduced a new meeting governance cycle where we will support our teams around three core areas:

- People
- Productivity
- Evaluation

The new meeting governance cycle in Service Delivery has removed working in silos and has created clear and transparent communication pathways. This is helping us to solve problems together and we are making informed and effective decisions to support our people and provide the best service to the public. All our decisions that are made within the governance cycle are aligned to the Code of Ethics and our values. These decisions are communicated transparently with the workforce to keep our teams up to date with information and decisions made.





We continue to use flexible ways of working to maximise appliance availability across the county. So, when a fire engine needs a fourth firefighter to become available, we will move them around the around the county to match our resources to risk.



We continue to use the Joint Fire Control (JFC) with Surrey and East Sussex fire and rescue services. This is where highly trained control room staff deal with emergency calls, mobilising the nearest and quickest vehicles to incidents. JFC also continually assess those resources dynamically and according to risk.

In 2022/23, we had several significant incidents throughout the year that required many resources. The majority of these happened in the summer months, which included sending 14 fire engines to a leisure centre fire in Copthorne (07/08/2022), and eight fire engines to a domestic fire in Crawley. We also responded to several wildfires where a care home was protected in Yapton (09/08/2022).

Other incidents of interest were a derelict care home fire in Haywards Heath and in March 2023 a large fire where we sent 14 fire engines and specialist vehicles to a Grade II listed hotel, shops and associated flats that were damaged by fire in Midhurst town centre.

We continue to ensure we are prepared to attend operational incidents when we are needed. We do this by visiting our known risk premises and sites in collaboration with our Protection and Prevention colleagues, so we can carry out joined up activity to reduce risk with residents and allow our firefighters to familiarise themselves with the built and rural environment. We continually horizon scan and identify any new risks or buildings that we need information on to support our firefighters in making effective decisions at an incident.

We regularly conduct exercises with our emergency partners and neighbouring fire services such as Surrey, Hampshire and East Sussex. We record all our exercise aims, objectives and learning outcomes to ensure we are learning from our exercises and we cascade this learning



across the service. This will enable future inspections by HMICFRS to easily view and scrutinise our exercise activity and operational preparedness.

To further support operational learning we have a debriefing process that is supported by our Operational Assurance Team who analyse all aspects of our operational learning and share this locally and nationally as required. This gives us the opportunity to adjust our policies where necessary. This assures us that we are keeping firefighter and public safety at the forefront of our work.

Our operational incident commanders are regularly tested and complete reaccreditation to ensure everyone is in date and qualified to lead incidents. We are looking forward to the opening of our new Horsham site in 2023, where our incident command facilities will support effective and efficient training opportunities.

We have also reintroduced a focus on parades at our fire stations. This gives each team at the start of a shift the opportunity to set the expectations for the day and make clear the response, protection and prevention activity that will be undertaken.

Our firefighters have been trained to complete fire safety audits at low-risk businesses across the county. We have completed 389 fire safety audits in 2022/23 which has reduced the risk in these buildings. Our firefighters carrying out these audits have a clear process for escalating risk that they find to our trained protection officers for further investigation. This training has enabled our firefighters greater awareness of the built environment and fire dynamics which is improving our overall firefighting strategy, operational assurance, data gathering and protection/prevention activity.

We have made improvements to record all of our work that our service delivery teams complete in our communities in the last year. Our firefighters have completed 1351 hours of community activity such as school visits, attending fetes and talks which are outside of our Safe & Wells Visits. This demonstrates our commitment to engaging with our communities to maximise opportunities to reduce risk.

Within the next year our CRMP focus will be to make progress on the other eight key priorities in service delivery. We look forward to starting in 2023 on 3.5 to implement an operational response model to maximise retained availability in strategic geographical areas aligned to community risk.





## Strategic Priority 4 Have a safe and valued workforce

### Our People

Our people are our greatest asset and they are at the heart of what we do. They always show their adaptability and willingness to go the extra mile for our residents. During 2022 the service introduced our People Service Plan to support Strategic Priority 4 within our CRMP, to 'Have a safe and valued workforce'. Our aim is to empower and support our people to be the best they can be, to deliver to the highest standards when serving our communities and to uphold the values of our fire and rescue service.

We want the service to continue to be a great place to work and to help our workforce become more resilient and diverse. We are continuously working to improve the culture of our service and in the way we work, and we will explore the progress we have made over the last year through various lenses below. We continue to make every effort to protect and grow the culture of teamwork and inclusivity whilst developing more agile ways of working.



Without doubt, there will be other external factors which will influence the work the service does. Through effective workforce planning, WSFRS will ensure it has the skills and capacity needed to be able to adapt to unknown factors and to be a high performing fire and rescue service.

### Health and wellbeing

We recognise that health and wellbeing is not an optional extra. Supporting our staff to be physically and mentally healthy not only forms part of our legal responsibilities, and makes good organisational sense, but most importantly, it is the right thing to do for our people who are working tirelessly to protect our communities.





We offer a range of services to support all employees to maintain healthy lifestyles. These include access to a comprehensive occupational health service, Employee Assistance Programme, close working with The Fire Fighters Charity, health and wellbeing roadshows, and Champion Health, a personalised, proactive health and wellbeing platform.

We have a network of Wellbeing Champions who are all volunteers from throughout the service and play a vital part in our wellbeing approach. We have also trained a group of staff as mental health first aiders, to ensure they can work alongside the wellbeing champions in supporting our workforce.

In the past year, we have also reviewed and relaunched the work of our team who support firefighters after being involved in a traumatic incident. All of the Trauma Support team are trained in Trauma Incident Management (TRiM) as practitioners.

We have also updated our procedures, policy and process on fitness that requires operational firefighters to undergo annual fitness testing. Fitness testing results are monitored by the Strategic Performance Board and remain consistently high.

## Equality, diversity and inclusion

Our ambition is for our workforce to be more representative of the diverse communities we serve within West Sussex. We are passionate in our belief that a diverse workforce will enable us to deliver a better service and make West Sussex even safer. We have therefore committed ourselves to wide-ranging positive action initiatives, aiming to attract candidates from diverse groups to join and stay with our service. We hope this will better equip us to meet the specific needs of the communities we serve.



The Public Sector Equality Duty set out in the [Equality Act 2010](#) requires public bodies to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work but our vision is that everyone representing the service will be an ambassador of equality, diversity and inclusion.

As part of our People Strategy we will focus on promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, understanding our communities' requirements through our Local Risk Management Plans, and delivering high quality and inclusive services. Throughout all of this we want to foster a positive, inclusive and diverse culture.

In the past year we have done this through creating bitesize guides created for all colleagues to understand what inclusivity means for specific groups. People Impact Assessments are now conducted for all internal governance papers, to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion is considered in all projects.

A 'Core Behaviour Standards and Expectations Framework' has been implemented across the service, which aligns both the WSCC's values, and the NFCC Code of Ethics. Equality, diversity and inclusion are both at the heart of every behaviour standard as well as being an explicitly stated standard with expectations detailed accordingly. And our Diversity Champions group and Diversity & Inclusion Steering Board remain key to our success in driving the inclusion agenda.

## Leadership and development

We want our service to be a professional and well-led organisation, exemplifying the Fire and Rescue Service Core Code of Ethics. The development of outstanding leadership skills, knowledge and capacity across all levels and teams has been supported in the past year by our new Leadership & Culture Programme, which has our Code of Ethics woven throughout.

Learning at all levels is supported by programmes of coaching, mentoring, and development centres, and underpinned by opportunities of shadowing, performance conversations, secondments, training and e-learning.

In the past year, we have also introduced a 'Development & Training Steering Group' to focus on the span of development activity across the Service, and how we are achieving our actions and activities which specifically relate to our people.



## Operational Training

As defined in the Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004, Fire & Rescue Authorities have the duty to secure the provision of training for personnel, this is in relation to fighting fires, road traffic collisions (RTCs) and emergencies other than fires and road traffic collisions.

All new firefighters attend basic training which is broken down into modules and each module is assessed. In the past year, we have run two new wholetime recruits courses, four new retained recruits courses, and one retained to wholetime migration process. This amounts to 43 new firefighters joining our service.

All front-line operational staff, inclusive of new starters, attend regular station/watch planned training in order to maintain their operational abilities and competence. This training is carried out / overseen by supervisory managers and recorded on the Firewatch system.

We have a highly operationally competent and safe workforce and ensure this remains the case as every front-line operational colleague attends centrally planned refresher training in order to support their local maintenance programme. Operational Training publish an Annual Training plan on the 1 October each year which includes all the courses for the following calendar year. In order to comply with the elements of Fighting Fires and RTC's the Service provide training in:

- Breathing Apparatus and Fire Behaviour (BA & FBT)
- Incident Command (IC)
- Blue Light Driving (ERD)
- Road Traffic Collision (RTC)
- Firefighter Core Skills





In relation to Emergencies other than fires and RTCs, our Operational Training Plan identifies emergency special services to include flooding and water rescue incidents, animal assistance incidents, hazardous materials/spills, and immediate emergency care.

In the past year, we have also developed a wider provision of accredited qualifications and learning programmes as a nationally accredited centre of Skills for Justice Awards. Our courses now accredited include the firefighter development programme, breathing apparatus and breathing apparatus instructors, road traffic collision instructors, and aerial ladder platform.

The Operational Training Team ensure all training delivered is National Operational Guidance (NOG) compliant, has the Joint Emergency Service Interoperability Programme (JESIP) principles woven throughout and adheres to the appropriate Fire Standards and relevant legislation. We align with our 3F Partners (East Sussex and Surrey FRs) for incident command, operational training and development, command support standards, and associated equipment.

Our move to the new Horsham Training Centre provides an opportunity to further enhance our refresher training programme, which we have been planning this year and will implement within 2023-24.



## Strategic Priority 5 Making best use of resources

This year has seen a focus on three key areas linked to the strategic priorities which are detailed below

### ***5.1 & 5.2 Develop and deliver an Estates Improvement Plan and improve the layout of our buildings to support equality and diversity***

Our staff are at the heart of our service and we are committed to providing a professional, modern and inclusive working environment. Investing in our training facilities and fire stations will enable us to provide high quality Prevention, Protection and Service Delivery services to all the communities we serve. This work will engender a strong sense of professionalism and purpose, enabling our staff to be the best they can be whilst providing a first-class service to our communities

2022/23 has seen us deliver a new state of the art Training Centre and Fire Station in Horsham.

This new sector leading facility is a significant step forward for the service ensuring we continue to meet the needs, demands and risks of our communities and staff. It incorporates best practice features in equality, diversity and inclusion, firefighters' health and wellbeing and includes cutting edge renewable technology.

This year has also seen us start a phased programme of improvement works across all our fire stations. This project aims to improve welfare facilities and the health and safety of our firefighters. This work will also support the Councils objectives for heat decarbonisation across West Sussex and as well as supporting smarter ways of working. We will promote equality and inclusion throughout our facilities to ensure staff and communities have equal access and opportunity regardless of their role, age, ethnic background, religious beliefs, gender or sexual orientation.





This project will also help us open up our fire stations to the communities they serve through shared spaces, enabling us to fully integrate in our communities so we can truly represent them. As with everything we do, in improving our estates we will seek to identify opportunities to cost recovery and provide value for money to West Sussex residents.

### ***5.3 We will continue to work to minimise any risk from contaminants to our firefighters***

Recent research has suggested that there is a link between occupational exposure to the products that are found in fires and an elevated risk of cancer in firefighters. The study analysed more than 1000 samples from on-site contaminant testing of UK fire stations, surveyed more than 10,000 firefighters and analysed the range of decontamination practices implemented by fire and rescue services in the UK and around the world.

2022/23 saw WSFRS complete an initial project aimed at mitigating the risk from these contaminants to firefighters. This project introduced first aid decontamination wipes on all front-line fire appliances, piloted a new post fire decontamination procedure and introduced this new decontamination procedure service wide. It also set out an ambition to deliver a longer-term project to consider the wider implications of associated studies on contaminants.

We have now started this longer-term project which has an added focus on fire station facilities and design to ensure that our buildings support the health and wellbeing of our firefighters. It will aim to embed a new safer culture that tackles the existing service culture towards contaminants.

This new project, which will be delivered throughout 2023 and 2024, will:

- Continue to address these growing issues by remaining up to date with the latest research in this evolving area.
- Seek to develop processes which remove contamination at source and remove the risk and prevalence of cross contamination within our buildings and vehicles.
- Prioritise further enhancements to operational procedures and training to reduce risks to firefighters from contaminants
- Develop an ongoing contaminants strategy and supporting processes to steer the continuous improvement to reduce the immediate risk of contaminants to firefighters.
- Identify additional requirements for health screening of our firefighters to support the long-term health of everyone who works for WSFRS.



### 3.8 A risk-based review of our specialist capability and asset requirements

There are a range of potential incidents that, due to their location or complexity, require additional equipment for their resolution. These include fires where there is poor access, accidents involving heavy goods vehicles, aircraft and trains, fires that require a specialist media for extinguishing or fires distant from water supplies, undertaking work or rescues at height, confined space operations, wildfire, water and flood rescue, and hazardous material incidents.

To enable us to respond to this range of risks we have a range of specialist vehicles located across the county, they are:

- 11 four-wheel drive
- 1 four-wheel drive with Environment Agency equipment
- 2 water carriers
- 2 incident command support units
- 3 heavy rescue tenders
- 2 breathing apparatus support units
- 2 boats
- 1 Unimog specialist all-terrain multi-purpose vehicle
- 1 drone
- 1 high volume pump;
- 2 aerial ladder platform.



We have already invested in specialist equipment to allow us to deal with the full range of foreseeable incidents and will continue to upgrade these capabilities as new technology becomes available.



As part of our commitment to continue to provide the best services to the communities of West Sussex, we have started a risk-based review of our specialist capabilities to ensure that they are able to support firefighting activities and deal with a whole range of emergencies that may occur across West Sussex. Our review will look at the capabilities we require to keep our firefighters safe, as well as specialist rescue capabilities which are required for more technical incidents that may not involve fire.

This review is the most comprehensive review of its type ever undertaken by WSFRS and it will ensure that we are able to continue to provide the highest quality service now and, in the future, whatever it might hold. In making any changes it is important that the services we



provide are delivered in the most valuable way and that they meet the needs of the communities we serve.

Whilst we are always working to improve our service, many of us in WSFRS are working every day to deliver and support our frontline services. This includes our policy and National Operational Guidance Team who make sure that our existing policies are kept up to date and that we support our frontline service delivery with the latest National Operational Guidance and procedures for new and emerging risks, such as lithium-ion batteries.

Our Health and Safety Team have continued to deliver the highest standards to ensure that WSFRS is compliant with its duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Using the Plan, Do, Check, Act approach the team has worked across the service and South-East regional partners to maintain the services duties towards employees and members of the public and continually remind colleagues of the duties they have to themselves and to each other by ensuring that all risk assessments remain up to date and more serious injuries are investigated and learnt from.

This year the Operational Assurance Team have been recognised 'Good' by HMICFRS and provides the organisation with the ability to assure itself that it has the right processes in place to effectively deal with all fire and rescue related risks and continually learn and improve. Our business continuity arrangements have continued to be tested throughout the year with the ongoing recovery from the COVID pandemic as well as the service preparing for the threat of industrial action.

2022/23 has seen WSFRS introduce several new approaches to help us understand risks in the county. These include the NFCC's Definition of Risk for Dwelling Fires which supports the service in targeting those that are most vulnerable to the risk of fire and the Dynamic Cover Tool. This is a real time system that tracks all of our fire engines against the risk across the county so that we know if there is a requirement to move any of our fire engines to maintain optimal fire cover.

We have also updated our strategic assessment of risk which is a high-level document which supports our CRMP and enables us to prioritise our resources based on risk.

## Future Improvements

The new Fire and Rescue Service Training Centre and fire station in Horsham is a significant step forward for the service ensuring we continue to meet the needs, demands and risks of our communities and staff. The sector is continuously learning from incidents such as the Grenfell Tower tragedy highlighting new and emerging hazards which we, as a service, must be able to adapt and respond to.

Developing this new centre will allow us to do that by:

- Training more firefighters, which is important to meet the recruitment levels required in the coming years
- Providing a centralised location, with more modern and effective training facilities, including sector-leading 'live fire' and incident command facilities
- Creating an inclusive workspace that is key to ensuring an effective and diverse service, which will also help to meet the needs of our diverse communities.



- Reducing carbon emissions through energy efficient buildings and renewable energy sources; and
- Keeping firefighters safer by enhancing training and managing exposure to contaminants through zoned areas.

Construction is nearing completion and the project is on track for the Service to begin both training and frontline firefighting operations in 2023.

# Supporting Appendices



PREVENTION



PROTECTION



RESPONSE



PEOPLE

## Appendix A Service Performance and Assurance Framework– Core Measures over last 3 years

CM #	Measure	Tolerance / Targets	20-21	21-22	22-23
CM1	Number of accidental dwelling fires in West Sussex over a year period	<381 green 381-398 amber >398 red	387	363	338
CM2	Number of fire deaths in accidental dwelling fires in West Sussex over a year period	0 green 1-3 amber >3 Red	4	1	3
CM3	Number of fire casualties in accidental dwelling fires in West Sussex over a year period	<20 green 20 – 30 amber >30 red	18	14	14
CM4	Number of deliberate primary fires in West Sussex over a year period	<180 green 180 - 199 amber 200+ red	157	134	160
CM5	Number of deliberate secondary fires in West Sussex over a year period	< 350 green 351 - 375 amber >375 red	257	246	299
CM6	Percentage of safeguarding referrals made within 24 hours of discovery	100% green <100% red	100%	96%	98%
CM7	Number of Safe and Well Visits delivered to households with at least 1 vulnerability or risk factor	4000 green 3999 - 3500 amber <3500 red	2998	3355	4680
CM8	Percentage of very high risk Safe and Well	100% green <100% red	31.1%	98.8%	100%

	referrals contacted within 1 working day				
CM9	Percentage of high risk Safe and Well Visit referrals contacted within 7 working days	100% green >98% amber <98% red	93.9%	99.4%	99.8%
CM10	Number of FSO regulated buildings having received an audit in each financial year	green 1000 850-999 amber <850 red	317	841	1004
CM11	Percentage of unsatisfactory fire safety audits	>50% green 30%-50% amber <30% red	23%	39.5%	28.6%
CM12	Percentage of successful prosecutions under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005	>75% green <75% red	100%	100%	100%
CM13	Percentage of statutory fire safety consultations completed within the 14-day time period	100% green <100% red	94.3%	99.5%	100%
CM14	The number of unwanted fire signals attended in West Sussex over a year period	Reduction on previous year of: >10% green 10% - 2% amber <2% red	1476	1601	1305
CM15	Percentage of SSRIs that are currently in date (high risk last 12 months, medium risk last 36 months)	>90% green 60% - 90% amber <60% red	Not measured	98.5%	99.3%
CM16	Percentage of emergency calls answered within 10 seconds by Joint Fire Control	>98% green 95% - 98% amber <95% red	94.2%	94.6%	95.4%
CM17	Percentage of mobilisations within 2	>98% green 95% - 98% amber	84.3%	87.5%	89.2%

	minutes by Joint Fire Control	<95% red			
CM18	Percentage of notifications of a level 2 Incident Commander to life risk calls within 5 minutes by Joint Fire Control	>98% green 95% - 98% amber <95% red	98.40%	98.90% ↗	100% ↗
CM19	Percentage of occasions the first fire engine meets its emergency response standard at a critical fire incident.	>89% green <89% red	90.2%	88.9% ↘	89.1% ↗
CM20	Percentage of occasions the second fire engine arrives at a critical fire incident within its emergency response standard.	>83% green <83% red	78.8%	79.5% ↗	84.2% ↗
CM21	Percentage of occasions the first fire engine meets its emergency response standard at a critical special service incident.	>80% green <80% red	80.1%	78.7% ↘	81.3% ↗
CM22	Percentage of availability on all wholetime frontline pumping appliances	100% green 95% - 99% amber <95% red	99.9%	98.8% ↘	97.6% ↘
CM23	Percentage of availability on all retained frontline pumping appliances (based on 24/7 crewing)	75% green 65% - 75% amber <65% red	69.3%	53.8% ↘	48.6% ↘
CM24	Percentage of all FRS survey respondents satisfied with the overall service from WSFRS	95% green 85% - 95% amber <85% red	Not measured	97.8%	98% ↗
CM25	Percentage of staff who are not sick across all staff groups	95% green 90% - 95% amber <90% red	97.8%	96.5% ↘	96.8% ↗

CM26	Percentage of eligible operational staff successfully completing fitness test	95% green 85% - 95% amber <85% red	86.2%	89.8% ↗	94.7% ↗
CM27	Percentage of eligible operational staff in qualification	>95% green 85% - 95% amber <85% red	91.7%	90.3% ↘	91.9% ↗
CM28	Percentage of RIDDOR accidents that are investigated and reported on time	100% green <100% red	100%	86.4% ↘	85.7% ↘
CM29	Percentage of Health and Safety Risk assessments within date	100% green >95% amber <95% red	Not measured	99.7%	100% ↗

*Note that the target for CM10: Number of fire safety audits was reduced from 1750 to 1000 part way through the year*



## Appendix B – Framework Requirements

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 - which sets out how the county council plans to shape its services for the next five years supported by the corporate services including how the county council spends your money.

WSFRS also operates under broader corporate policies on:

- Fraud & Corruption Policy
- Equality & Inclusion Policy
- Pay Policy

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:

- a) Must set out priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in connection with the discharge of their functions.
- b) May contain guidance to fire and rescue authorities in connection with the discharge of any of their functions.

c) 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 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). 40 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 1st October 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 CRMP.

Contact us in an emergency you should always dial 999.

To find out more on West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service please follow the link to our website:

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/fire> 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](mailto:wsfrs@westsussex.gov.uk)

By telephone: 01243 777100

Or write to us at: West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters, County Hall, Chichester, PO19 1RQ