

Fire Improvement Plan: September 2020 Update

Introduction

1. The 2020/21 budget provided £1.7m of funding, to continue to deliver on the Improvement Plan approved by Members in July 2019 and to specifically address the areas of concern raised by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) when they re-visited West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (WSFRS) on 19th February 2020.
2. The Improvement Plan at this early stage of the financial year suggests further funding of £0.371m, to meet reprofiled expenditure will be required in year; although it is acknowledged that this value is likely to change as plans are implemented throughout the year. Options are being considered for how this potential funding requirement will be met.
3. Financial investment into the service has improved our overall resilience, enabling us to play a crucial role in the response to Covid-19 both locally and regionally through the Sussex Resilience Forum (SRF).
4. We saw an increase in the number of Retained Duty System firefighters being available, and as such, have had more fire engines available and ready to respond when needed than pre-crisis.
5. The Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) supported South East Coast Ambulance Service with logistical support, mechanical support and trained a number of firefighters to crew ambulances with paramedics for when and if required.
6. The service implemented strict infection control measures at the start of the Covid-19 crisis and staff levels were not detrimentally affected throughout.
7. Some areas affected by Covid-19 as a result of lockdown and social distancing measures was our ability to deliver some elements of practical training. Training in risk-critical firefighting skills was provided by additional training online through webinars and virtual input by trainers.

Prevention and Protection

8. Statutory activities such as building regulations consultations were able to continue unaffected. The FRS also maintained the ability to respond to fire safety concerns in businesses throughout that required enforcement action.
9. Our standard risk-based inspection programme of fire safety audits required reprofiling as many of the premises due to be audited were closed during lockdown and restrictions meant it was unfeasible to visit in person.

Wherever possible, telephone and desk-top audits were carried out, and as restrictions eased, protection have succeeded in clearing the pent-up demand from the lockdown period by temporarily redirecting resources and with increased specialist resources introduced through improvement funding.

10. The Fire Safety legislation, which the Fire Authority is required to enforce is the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, weaknesses in this legislation were identified and to address these, a new Fire Safety Bill is going through Parliament and is currently at the Public Consultation Stage.
11. Staff from the WSFRS Protection Team, who are delegated to enforce Fire Safety on behalf of the Fire Authority, have been engaged in workshops and surveys throughout the review of the legislation. This includes providing information during the 'call for evidence' stage and more recently in helping to develop the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) reply to the public consultation which closes on 12th October 2020.
12. The recent investments by the Authority through the improvement work has helped the service to deal with the impacts of this legislation. This has included more staff; who are being trained to a higher level to meet the expectations in the NFCC Competency Framework for Fire Safety; and, a new fire safety data base called Farynor.
13. The Building Safety Bill is currently as the 'call for evidence' stage and this second piece of legislation aimed High Rise Residential Blocks may also have a significant impact on the service's work demands. The service is fully engaged with the consultation of this legislation.
14. Prevention activity was also affected as most of the residents that we normally visit are either self-isolating or shielding. To ensure the FRS could still help those at risk of fire, they offered safe and well visits in three ways; in person with staff social distancing and wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) (for those at highest risk), by phone and by skype. The FRS have succeeded in clearing the pent-up demand from the lockdown period by temporarily redirecting resources and with increased specialist resources introduced through improvement funding.

Looking after our People and Future Learnings

15. WSCC Human Resources (HR) team, in partnership with the FRS People and Organisational Development team, produced guidance for staff including Staff Special Circumstances Policy. This meant staff felt supported by the service if having to self-isolate.

16. HR also provided much support to FRS managers around staff self-isolating and there were weekly messages, through Business Continuity Action Team (BCAT) meetings around regular contact with staff, and a high level of information around wellbeing and mental health. Senior managers conducted virtual coffee catch ups and weekly surgeries.
17. WSFRS commissioned a 10kv debrief to evaluate cross sector professionals managing the Covid-19 crisis across West Sussex County Council. This required the modification of 10kv technologies and methodologies to enable participants to engage using their smartphones, with live streaming video facilitation. We are reviewing the report which will help us with our further learning from the response to Covid-19.
18. The service surveyed all staff at the beginning of the pandemic to ascertain their needs, particularly around home working, flexible requirements and shielding. This enabled managers to have one to one discussion with team members to ensure that everyone's needs were accounted for. This included flexibility to allow staff to shield with loved ones where requested to reduce anxiety in uncertain times, which shows how the service went over and above 'minimum requirements' and tried really hard to focus on people. It also allowed the service to forecast predicted staffing and resourcing, which helped to ensure that priorities were focused on with an eye over the horizon.

Fire and Rescue Improvement Plan - September 2020

Phase 1 Summary	Revised Full Amount Estimated	Actual spend 2019/20	Planned spending plan for 2020/21	Projected spend for 2020/21	Variation to revised spending plan 2020/21	Planned Spending plan for 2021/22
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Temporary investment						
Organisational Development Manager (12 months)	0	0	0	0	0	0
HR Advisor (6 months)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wellbeing Advisor/Lead - initial two year fixed term contract	44	0	44	44	0	0
Prevention Business Analyst (6 months)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Business Analyst for Fire Safety Transformation (6 months)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Prevention Data Analyst (12 months)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Data Cleansing & Analysis Officer (12 months)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Insight Officer to deliver AFA review (12 months)	47	0	47	47	0	0
External resource to clear risk based improvement programme - 680 inspections at £200 per inspection	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fire Safety Support Officer - To book planned audits and manage reports (12 months)	0	0	0	0	0	0
FRS Project support FC20 delivery and HMICFRS improvement plans - (until 31st March 2020)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Employers Network for Equality Inclusion – 15 workshops and report	30	12	18	18	0	0
Uniform Replacement - One-off to allow for, better fit for females and cultural identity changes	100	0	100	100	0	0
Development of Performance and Assurance Framework and member training	39	0	39	39	0	0
Programme Support Officer x 2	73	0	73	73	0	0
	333	12	321	321	0	0
Contingency	337	0	141	141	0	196
Permanent increase in base budget						
Note that in 2020/21 the full year effect is shown as this is the budget which will be required					Full year effect	Full year effect
Prevention Manager	156	23	63	63	0	70
Area Manager Protection	242	48	96	96	0	98
Diversity and Inclusion Advisor for FRS	119	23	47	47	0	49
Workforce Engagement Lead	123	0	57	57	0	66
High Risk Safe and Well Visit Specialists x 3	215	31	86	86	0	98
Protection Officers	489	51	217	217	0	221
Prevention, Protection, Quality Assurance Trainers	446	23	209	209	0	214
Ops Assurance Performance & Audit	145	26	59	59	0	60
WSFRS Hub - Principle & Senior Management Support Officer	69	12	28	28	0	29
Resource Coordinator (Resource Office) - crewing office	191	26	83	83	0	82
FRS HMI Performance Manager	155	28	63	63	0	64
Reinstate Watch Manager B payments to Hay A's - 60 FTE	674	150	262	262	0	262
Purchase of Farynor IT system and Licences	284	106	131	131	0	47
Assistant Chief Fire Officer	78	0	39	39	0	39
Project Manager	121	0	55	55	0	66
Business Analyst	117	0	53	53	0	64
Programmes Assurance and Governance Project Manager - Delivers Integrated Risk Management Plan	121	0	55	55	0	66
IT equipment and vehicles for additional FTE	200	0	100	100	0	100
FRS training budget for protection competency training (for dedicated protection staff)	101	24	25	25	0	52
FRS training budget to ensure competence in protection and prevention training (for all appropriate staff)	80	6	37	37	0	37
FRS branding and values embedding budget	67	7	30	30	0	30
Other	37	37	0	0	0	0
Organisational Development Manager	136	19	57	57	0	60
HR Advisor	102	19	39	39	0	44
	4,468	659	1,891	1,891	0	1,918
Total	5,138	671	2,353	2,353	0	2,114
Available Funding						
Base Budget Funding (2020/21 total includes £1.2m flexible use of capital receipts)		400		1,600		1,596
One off Funding				100		
Fire Improvement Reserve Funding				282		
Total Funding Available				1,982		1,596
Potential Additional Funding Required				371		518