

Operational Resilience and Assurance

8. The service recognises the critical importance of operational resilience and has made significant progress in assuring this, the service has reintroduced the Assistant Chief Fire Officer position, and introduced a new strategic officer operating model which included upskilling a number of Area Managers to provide resilience to ensure that West Sussex always has resilient operational cover to deal with major and significant incidents.
9. A Service Delivery Centre has been introduced which focuses on ensuring operational resources are prioritised in most efficient way. This has improved the availability of operational assets and also reduced the burden on operational response managers of organising logistics, enabling them to focus on core activity such as training, prevention and protection work.
10. The service recognises the extent of the challenge presented by the retained duty system, which are challenges similarly faced by all fire and rescue services who operate this duty system. They have clear steps in place to improve the resilience of retained appliances, including investment in Retained Liaison Officers to support recruitment and retention, county crewing to utilise off-duty retained staff to cover shortfalls and acquiring new training facilities with an operating model that will guarantee access to retained firefighters at times that reduce the impact on their primary employment.
11. The investment into the service has resulted in significant improvements. In November 2020 a decision was made to close the Independent Advisory Panel as a result of the considerable improvements made by West Sussex Fire and Rescue. The panel recognised that there has been an overwhelming amount of progress since the first meeting on 11th December 2019 and subsequent inspection (HMICFRS) revisit of which recognition was also reported regards the pace of change and positive impact this was having on staff.