
Report to Fire and Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee

23 November 2021

West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service Statement of Assurance

Report by Chief Fire Officer

Electoral division(s): All

Summary

The Fire Authority (FRA) is required to provide annual assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and show how they have had due regard to the expectations set out in their Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and as part of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

This Statement reinforces the commitment to provide our communities with clear information about how we manage public funds and assure the effectiveness of our financial, governance and operational fire service arrangements.

This Statement supports the West Sussex County Council Annual Governance Statement 2020-21. West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service publishes an Annual Statement of Assurance. Cabinet will be asked to approve the West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service Annual Statement of Assurance for 2020-21.

Focus for Scrutiny

West Sussex Fire Service statements of assurance should be published annually by fire and rescue authorities. Members should consider the report at the appendix and provide feedback on whether it demonstrates a focus on the annual performance of the service to make a valid assessment of assurance against the local fire and rescue service performance.

Proposal

1 Background and context

- 1.1 The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, published on 11 July 2012, sets out that: "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 integrated risk management plan and the requirements included in this Framework. To provide assurance, fire and rescue authorities must publish an annual statement of assurance."
- 1.2 As reported in a high level overview the West Sussex County Council Annual Governance Statement 2020-21, it references actions to reinforce service improvement in Fire and Rescue and Children's Services and contribution to its overall assurance of improved corporate capability and capacity.

- 1.3 This statement of assurance highlights the areas that have been delivered to address that as well as the original Integrated Risk Management Plan objectives that feed into that assured position.
- 1.4 Fire and rescue authorities are accountable for their performance and should be open to evaluation by the communities they serve. Information on their performance should be accessible, robust, fit-for-purpose and accurately report on effectiveness and value for money and this report provides that to the organisation with supporting data reviewed at the Fire and Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.5 Fire and rescue authorities are responsible for ensuring that their business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.
- 1.6 As some information has been presented throughout the year this has been highlighted to ensure that it is clear, accessible, and user-friendly within existing documents. There have been extracts, or links to these documents embedded into the statement of assurance.
- 1.7 The statement of assurance will be used as a source of information on which to base the Secretary of State's biennial report under section 25 of the Fire and Rescue Act 2004.
- 1.8 Fire and rescue authorities may wish to include a section in their statements of assurance on any potential improvements they have identified across their accounting, governance or operational responsibilities to communities, particularly where plans are underway. This report includes the annual report as well as the progress against preparations for the Community Risk Management Plan including its consultation which will commence in Quarter 3 2021/2022.
- 1.9 The statement of assurance should be signed off by an elected member of the relevant authority who is able to take responsibility for its contents, this has been entered into the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for a decision on 3 December 2021 by Cabinet.

2 Finance

- 2.1 Conclusions from this inspection have no financial implications to the Council.

3 Risk implications and mitigations

- 3.1 The Fire Authority and members of the Fire and Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee will continue to monitor the performance of the fire and rescue service to ensure that any risk from ceasing this process is mitigated through effective planning through the subsequent years of the Integrated Risk Management Plan.

4 Policy alignment and compliance

- 4.1 This report has positive implications for the community as it supports the continued improvement journey of the Fire and Rescue Service to all residents in West Sussex.

5. Equalities and diversity

- 5.1 There are no equality implications associated with the content of this report. One of the principal aims of the Statement of Assurance is to provide an accessible way in which communities, public sector authorities and partners may make a valid assessment of our performance. The information presented in the report will be reviewed continuously to ensure that it reflects and adheres to any changes or developments in equalities legislation.

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Appendix A – Statement of Assurance

Background papers

None