Report to Cabinet

March 2022

West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service Community Risk Management Plan 2022-2026

Report by Sabrina Cohen-Hatton, Chief Fire Officer

Electoral division(s): All

Summary

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (2018) requires all Fire and Rescue Authorities to produce a Community (Integrated) Risk Management Plan[1] (CRMP) that covers at least a 3-year period. The plan must identify and assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks to communities and set out the arrangements that have been put in place to prevent and respond to them.

Our CRMP is a four-year strategy that sets out the service's objectives to meet the risks identified within the county. It sets out six key proposals for change that will enable the service to do this more effectively. The priorities are aligned to the WSCC 2021-25 Council Plan, setting out clearly the way in which Fire and Rescue activities contribute to the Council objectives.

This paper sets out the draft West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service Community Risk Management Plan (2022-2026).

Recommendation

> That Cabinet approve the West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service Community Risk Management Plan 2022- 2026 CRMP for publication.

Proposal

1 Background and context

1.1   Our Council Plan (2021-25) sets out four key priorities for WSCC, underpinned by a cross-cutting theme on tackling climate change:

- Keeping people safe from vulnerable situations
- A sustainable and prosperous economy

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[1] The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) commissioned a Community Risk Management (CRM) project to develop robust, evidence based digital guidance that supports a consistent approach to the CRM planning process which has resulted in a national change in terminology from Integrated to Community Risk Management Plan.

- Helping people and communities fulfil their potential
- Making best use of resources

1.2   This strategy sets out how West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service contributes to these priorities through the activity required through its CRMP. This includes requirements set out in statute within the Fire and Rescue Services Act (2004), and the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (2018) which sets out government priorities for fire and rescue authorities.

1.3   The framework identifies high level expectations but does not prescribe how individual fire and rescue services should conduct its day-to-day business, which is a role for the fire and rescue authority, in consultation with the communities and residents that it serves. It details the following five priorities:

- Make appropriate provision for fire prevention and protection activities and response to fire and rescue related incidents;
- Identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face;
- Collaborate with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the service they provide;
- Be accountable to communities for the service they provide; and
- Develop and maintain a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse.

1.4   The framework also states that a CRMP must:

- Reflect up to date risk analyses including an assessment of all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect the area of the authority;
- Demonstrate how prevention, protection and response activities will best be used to prevent fires and other incidents and mitigate the impact of identified risks on its communities, through authorities working either individually or collectively, in a way that makes best use of available resources;
- Outline required service delivery outcomes including the allocation of resources for the mitigation of risks;
- Set out a management strategy and risk-based programme for enforcing the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in accordance with the principles of better regulation set out in the Statutory Code of Compliance for Regulators, and the Enforcement Concordat;
- Cover at least a three-year time span and be reviewed and revised as often as it is necessary to ensure that the authority is able to deliver the requirements set out in this Framework;
- Reflect effective consultation throughout its development and at all review stages with the community, its workforce and representative bodies and partners; and
- Be easily accessible and publicly available.

2 Proposal Details

CRMP Design

2.1 In accordance with the framework document and the newly published CRMP Fire Standard[2], we have undertaken a robust and detailed assessment of foreseeable operational risk. This process has considered our community risks, using a range of tools to identify where incidents might happen, when they might occur and how serious they could be. Using this data, alongside historical information about demand, allows us to identify options to better target our resources, including firefighters and appliances more effectively, resulting in a better balance of prevention, protection and response.

2.2 A programme of pre-consultation and engagement activities were held to inform the development of the CRMP. A series of events were held with staff from across the service to gather views and opinions to help shape the CRMP which included themes around new ways of working, learning and development, use of technology and operational preparedness.

Risk Analysis

2.3 We have used a wide range of complex data sources to inform our Technical Risk document that sets out the risk within the county. These include critical fire risk maps, Mosaic and Exeter data, incident data and modelling, national and community risk registers, and West Sussex Life. In addition to this we use housing, industrial and business development plans and infrastructure modelling to determine predicted changes in risk and potential demand in the coming years.

2.4 We define the critical fire risk for each area in the county from three years of weighted historical data, drawing on information from:

- dwelling fire rate, taking the number of households into account

- other critical building fires

- dwelling fire casualties rate raking the population into account

- the level of deprivation from the national index of multiple deprivation.

2.5 Based on this data, each LSOA is given a critical fire risk grade from very high to low. This allows us to keep our focus on the most vulnerable residents and those communities at highest risk, thereby ensuring our Prevention, Protection and Response resources are targeted efficiently to achieve the best possible outcomes for our local communities.

2.6 Our risk analysis predicts large percentage rises within demographics that are vulnerable to fire, such as the 80+ age group. Increasing life expectancy, coupled with limited improvements in healthy life expectancy, is likely to mean an increase in age-related impairment and disability, which is another risk factor for vulnerability from fire. With an increasing number of older people, the number of people with physical and sensory impairments will continue to grow

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[2] https://www.firestandards.org/approved-standards/community-risk-management-planning-fss-rmp01/

along with the number of people with dementia. There will be more people living longer with multiple long-term conditions.

2.7   Poor health and disability are dwelling fire risk factors. This is likely to lead to an increase in demand for services both in terms of preventing and attending fires, particularly as we encourage and assist people to live independently at home.

2.8   Deprivation is clearly linked to higher risk of fires. Being a single parent, never in paid work, living on your own and being deprived were the top factors associated with higher rates of fire in the home. West Sussex now has five small areas falling in the 10% of the most deprived areas in England.

2.9   Our risk analysis also indicates a need to consider a growing number of extreme weather events, such as wildfire and flooding, as climate change continues to impact. We also need to be prepared to deal with a range of incidents such as major fires (including high rise and waste processing and recycling sites), and incidents such as Marauding Terror Attacks. There are also emerging risks from new technologies, such as increasing use of electric vehicles and Battery Energy Storage Systems.

2.10   Our updated risk analysis has shown that both risk and operational demand are consistent across a seven-day period. There is a gap in our current operating model as we have four less wholetime fire engines available during the weekend daytime, when compared to weekdays.

2.11   Data also demonstrates that retained fire engine availability has reduced by 10.7% over a five-year period. Retained availability is lowest during daytime hours, both on weekdays and weekends. Fire engines crewed by retained firefighters at our four-day crewing stations are typically the least available type of resource. These factors can lead to a reduction in fire appliance availability in rural areas and along our Eastern border, particularly during the weekend daytime period.

Proposal details

2.12   Our 5 Strategic Priorities are outlined in the table below, along with the corresponding Council Plan Priority that each contributes to.
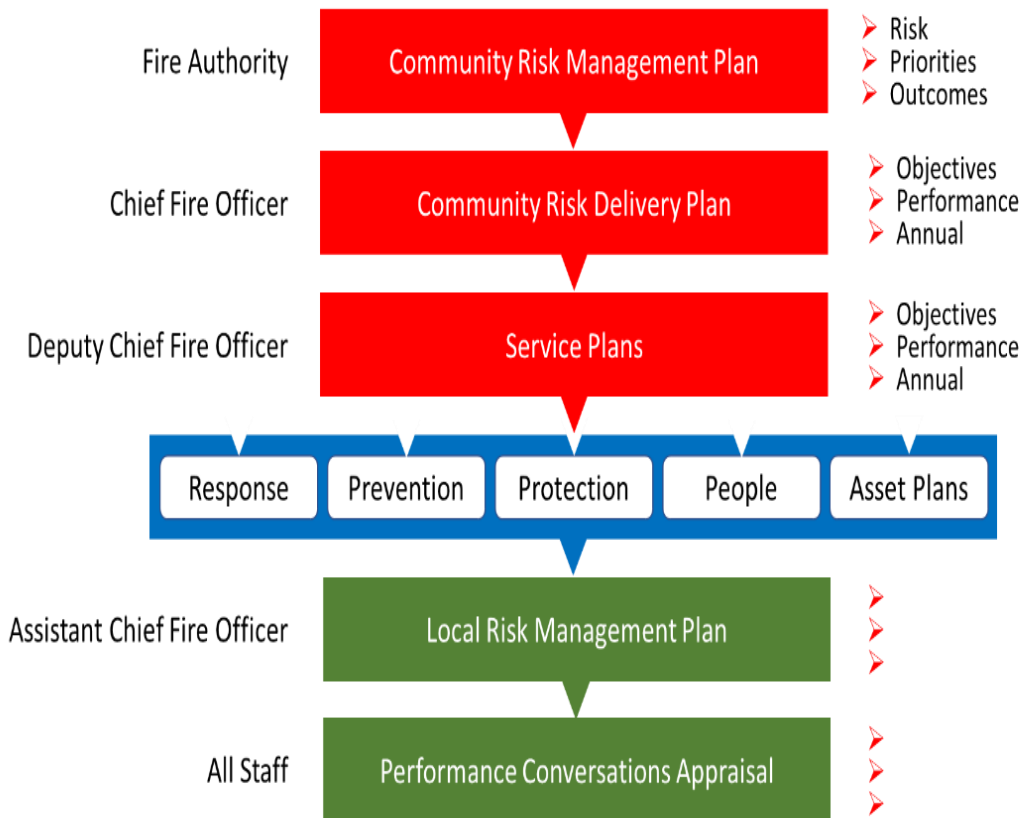
WSFRS Strategic Priority	Council Plan Priority
Preventing fires and emergencies from happening	Keeping people safe from vulnerable situations
Protecting people, firefighters and property by making buildings as safe from fire as they can be	Keeping people safe from vulnerable situations; Building a safe and prosperous economy
Responding to fires and emergencies quickly and effectively – (relates to Council Plan priority	Keeping people safe from vulnerable situations; Helping people and communities to fulfil their potential
Have a safe and valued workforce	Helping people and communities to fulfil their potential

Making best use of resources	Making the best use of resources

2.13 We have identified six proposals for change that will improve the service, in line with the risk analysis of the county. These are listed below, a more detailed 'What', 'Why' and 'How' rationale, along with supporting analysis of risk data is outlined in the CRMP consultation document in Appendix A.

2.13.1 Enhance our Retained operating model – this proposal seeks to increase the availability of our retained firefighters across West Sussex to maximise the amount of emergency response cover available and to strengthen operational resilience.

2.13.2 Weekend Protection, Prevention and Response improvements – a proposal to extend immediate response cover to our current day crewing stations, helping us to get to more incidents more quickly and to increase the amount of prevention work we are able to deliver.

2.13.3 Improving Protection, Prevention and Response performance in rural areas – we propose to extend the crewing arrangements to improve cover and prevention activity at weekends in rural parts of West Sussex.

2.13.4 Unwanted False Alarms - Changes to our response which include options for a risk based and managed approach to reducing Unwanted Fire Alarms including the use of technology and charging.

2.13.5 Review of Emergency Response Standards (ERS) – in line with a proposed national review of these standards by the NFCC.

2.13.6 Enhanced specialist capability and assets – a review to ensure that our current specialist capability is fit for purpose and meets the current and future risks that our County may face.

Delivering the CRMP

2.14 CRMP implementation is supported by a Community Risk Management Framework (figure 1) with governance, assurance and performance reviews at each level.

Fire Authority	Community Risk Management Plan	➢ Risk ➢ Priorities ➢ Outcomes
Chief Fire Officer	Community Risk Delivery Plan	➢ Objectives ➢ Performance ➢ Annual
Deputy Chief Fire Officer	Service Plans	➢ Objectives ➢ Performance ➢ Annual
	Response Prevention Protection People Asset Plans	
Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Local Risk Management Plan	➢ ➢ ➢
All Staff	Performance Conversations Appraisal	➢ ➢ ➢

2.15 The CRMP is supported by a Community Risk Delivery Plan which the Chief Fire Officer is responsible for. This sets out how the service will operationalise the priorities set out within the CRMP, including detailed annual objectives for each year. This plan is supported by a set of Core Measures which are scrutinised by the Fire and Rescue Services Scrutiny Committee, and KPIs that are included in the Council Plan.

2.16 Service plans set out the activity and resources required within each department to deliver the requirements of the Community Risk Delivery Plan, supported by a suite of Service Measures. These feed into Local Risk Management Plans which set out the business plan for each fire station area to deliver the requirements of the CRMP at a local level. They focus on community risk, the delivery of service and the subsequent risk mitigation activities. These are utilised in setting individual performance objectives, creating a "golden thread" between the CRMP and daily activities.

3   Other options considered

3.1 As the production of the CRMP is a statutory duty no other options have been considered.

4 Consultation, engagement and advice

4.1   A public consultation was undertaken in relation to the strategic objectives set out within the plan, including the six supporting strategic proposals for change (see Appendix A). This consultation included wide community engagement, consultation with partners and staff. It was designed using best practice for public consultation set out in the Local Government Association 'Gunning Principles[3]'.

4.2   The aim of our public consultation was to engage with as broad a range of people who live and work in West Sussex as possible through available tools and media including the WSCC Engagement Hub. Adjustments were made to our approach to account for risks prevented by Covid. We supplemented face-to-face with on-line engagement. This also avoided unnecessary travel and reduced printed material, in keeping with WSFRS and WSCC's carbon reduction policies.

4.3   On-line activities included social media campaigns (through Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn), targeted emails and links / referrals from local government websites, which, along with direct access, took the public to our engagement hub to complete the survey.

4.4   Proactive engagement included a range of partners, elected members and local authorities which included our neighbouring FRS, Sussex Police, South East Coast Ambulance Service, district and boroughs and the 135 town and parish councils.

4.5   The consultation ensured that targeted efforts were made to reach communities that can be hard-to-reach . This included extensive public engagement with community groups, faith organisations, business groups and social organisations across the county.

4.6   The public consultation was advertised extensively through the residents e-panel, which totals in excess of 100,000 residents, as well as through the residents Town and Parish E-Newsletters. Public engagement was also extended to a number of WSCC's libraries at a variety of times to ensure the widest possible reach to further engage with hard-to-reach residents who might not have online access.

4.7   A mid-point review identified disproportionately fewer responses from people under the age of 30 and over the age of 75, women, and people from minority ethnic backgrounds. Further work was undertaken to target these demographics through various targeted social media outlets and community groups and hubs including the Cadet schemes around the county. Crawley was also targeted via the Inter Faith Network which accessed a further 1000 individuals in the Crawley area.

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[3] https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/The%20Gunning%20Principles.pdf

4.8   Analysis of the engagement metrics revealed that over 5000 people interacted with the consultation, 1,800 of these visitors engaged further or took a further step with the process and 698 people completed the survey. An analysis of the consultation engagement hub information can be found in the background papers on the Engagement Consultation Analysis.

Consultation proposals & outcome

4.9   There was strong support for each of the proposals for change, which are subsequently recommended for approval as part of the CRMP. An executive summary is provided below (more detail can be found in the background papers).

Strategic proposal	What people told us
Enhance our Retained operating model	- 89% strongly agreed or agreed - 7% disagreed or strongly disagreed - 4% neither agreeing nor disagreeing
Weekend Protection, Prevention and Response improvements	- 80% strongly agreed or agreed - 10% disagreed or strongly disagreed - 10% neither agreeing nor disagreeing
Improving Protection, Prevention and Response performance in rural areas	- 84% strongly agreed or agreed - 8% disagreed or strongly disagreed - 8% neither agreeing nor disagreeing
Unwanted False Alarms - Changes to our response proposal 1: Implement a risk-based approach in low risk commercial properties, using call filtering to identify whether a response is required. This would remove the automatic response to automated fire alarms	- 53% strongly agreed or agreed - 33% disagreed or strongly disagreed - 13% neither agreeing nor disagreeing
Unwanted False Alarms - Changes to our response proposal 2: Introduce a charging scheme for repeated false alarms	- 74% strongly agreed or agreed - 18% disagreed or strongly disagreed - 8% neither agreeing nor disagreeing
Unwanted False Alarms - Changes to our response proposal 3: Use new technological developments to change the way that businesses manage potential false alarms and how we then consequentially respond	- 73% strongly agreed or agreed - 13% disagreed or strongly disagreed - 14% neither agreeing nor disagreeing

Review of Emergency Response Standards (ERS)	- 81% strongly agreed or agreed - 4% disagreed or strongly disagreed - 15% neither agreeing nor disagreeing
Enhanced specialist capability and assets	- 91% strongly agreed or agreed - 3% disagreed or strongly disagreed - 6% neither agreeing nor disagreeing

4.10 As a result of the feedback, we received we are confident that our original proposals and assessment of risk are well supported by the public in their responses. The one proposal where we received significant feedback was proposal 4. In response to this feedback, we are preparing a communication plan to ensure that the objectives of the proposal are well understood by those most affected – this will include an impact assessment and engagement with businesses, insurance sector and Chambers of Commerce.

5 Finance

5.1 In order to deliver the CRMP an increase in base budget of £1.3m has been agreed, falling to £1.150 in subsequent years. The requirement for an increase to fund the CRMP had been recognised in previous medium term financial plans.

5.2 Most of the uplift reflects an increase in the number of firefighter positions required to extend the availability of fire crews on the weekends and to improve the resilience of the retained duty system.

5.3 As part of the CRMP it is proposed that there will be a risk-based review of the fleet relating to special appliances. We anticipate that any subsequent changes to the fleet will be met within the existing capital programme allocation for fire and rescue service fleet.

6 Risk Implications and mitigations

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
That the document does not comply with statutory requirements	This is being mitigated via close reference to the current National Framework for Fire and Rescue during generation of the document, consultation with appropriate Fire and Rescue Service professionals, and oversight by Members.
That the document does not inform delivery by the fire and rescue service	This is being mitigated through use of the CRMP action plans to directly inform business planning by the service, and by accounting to Members and the Public, through an online performance dashboard and an annual Statement of Assurance. Performance will also be addressed and scrutinised going forward.

7 Policy alignment and compliance

7.1   The five strategic priorities within the CRMP are aligned with Our Council Plan (2021-25) and the commitments of:

- Keeping people safe from vulnerable situations

- A sustainable and prosperous economy

- Helping people and communities fulfil their potential

- Making best use of resources.

7.2   The aims and actions of the CRMP will be compliant with all statutory responsibilities, further detail can be found in the CRMP document at Appendix A). An Equality Impact Assessment can also be found at Appendix B.

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Appendices

Appendix A: CRMP 2022-2026

Appendix B: People Impact Assessment

Background papers

CRMP Engagement Consultation (available upon request).