

Community Support, Fire and Rescue Portfolio - Summary

Performance Summary

1. Performance highlights this quarter include:

Fire and Rescue Service

- **Staff performance conversations** have been taking place throughout Q4 to ensure all Fire and Rescue staff have a meaningful opportunity to reflect on their year's performance and plan for their contribution to the team and service plans for next year. The process has been supported by the latest round of leadership workshops which aligned to cover Effective Performance and Development Conversations.
- The new **Fire and Rescue Welfare Unit** went live in February. This unit has been specifically designed to provide enhanced support and facilities for staff during operational incidents. This vehicle will ensure that our staff have access to essential comforts whilst attending protracted operational incidents.
- The service continues to work hard to ensure work undertaken for the community and those who are employed within the service uphold the highest of **professional and personal standards**. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for existing employees commenced in Q4, in-line with the National Fire Chiefs Council and DBS guidance. This followed the amendments to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 ("Exceptions Order") which now includes Fire and Rescue Service employees.
- **Service Delivery Assurance Visits** commenced during the quarter. These visits are designed to provide an objective overview when looking at professional workplace standards to ensure they are being maintained across the authority's fire stations. The aim of these visits is to identify positive areas of best practice, as well as things that could be improved for staff and customers.
- One of the services key objectives is to deliver a **new strategy for Fireground Contaminants**. As part of the Community Risk Management Plan, this work was launched in February and means that every Fire Station is equipped to better deal with firefighter decontamination alongside the launch of a new seven-step decontamination procedure to use at an incident.
- The **Targeted Education Team were presented with a recognition award** from the High Sheriff of West Sussex, on behalf of The Crown. The team were formally recognised for the work they do behind the scenes to protect and support communities, through the organisation of fire and road safety initiatives for young people.

Community Support

- Two initiatives from the **Library Service have been shortlisted for prestigious national libraries sector awards.**
 - A Workforce Digital Skills Training Programme has been recognised for its comprehensive approach to upskilling all staff to enable them to better meet the needs of library customers in an increasingly digital world.
 - A second nomination was earned for a lottery funded project which involves volunteers being recruited and trained to provide one-to-one support for adults learning to read.

Nominations were received from across the country with shortlisted entries announced in March, and the overall winners to be announced in June 2024.

- The **Library Service recorded 30 incidents of anti-social behaviour** during Q4. Specialist de-escalation training for frontline staff has continued during the year, with almost 200 staff now having completed this training.
- The **Registration Service** delivered 375 ceremonies, registered 2,388 deaths and 2,178 births during Q4, with customer satisfaction for services remaining at 98%. This quarter, the service has been working closely with the Medical Examiner's Office in preparation for the Medical Examiner's scrutiny of all medical certificate of cause of death (MCCDs) becoming statutory; this is expected to come into force at the end of April 2024.
- In Q4, the **Coroners Service** received 1,032 referrals resulting in the opening of 224 Inquests. Coroners concluded 185 Inquests between January and April 2024 meaning a total of 328 court sessions were listed. In addition, the development of the new Coroners Court facility in Horsham is progressing well with the first Courts expected to be listed in late May 2024.
- The County Council was allocated £9.7m of **Household Support Fund** in 2023/24. Funding has been distributed in accordance with the guidance by a range of partner agencies including District and Boroughs, Citizens Advice, and community-based organisations. During the year, the Community Hub received over 11,900 online forms via the application-based element of the scheme. Of the practical support provided:
 - 10,811 requests for urgent practical assistance have been met by way of vouchers or purchasing goods of services that has seen over 32,000 individuals supported.
 - Food support continues to see the largest demand with 10,339 of requests being from those in urgent need of food supplies.
 - Families continue to be the largest cohort requesting support with 7,118 requests received from households with children.
 - Over 487 applications have been received via the internal West Sussex Profession Referral Route, providing quick access to support for requesting payments towards fuel bills, white goods or other services.


During Q4, over 19,300 free school meal eligible children were also supported with supermarket vouchers during the February half-term.




- The **Digital Safety Team** have been supporting residents and professionals to be aware of and engage with how to be safe online and prevent people from being a victim of online crime. During Q4:
 - 295 residents, professionals and teachers in West Sussex received online safety training.
 - 1,205 children engaged with digital safety assemblies.
 - 416 new registrations to the monthly Staying Safe Online E-Newsletter.
 - The Digital Safety Volunteers (formally Digital Ambassadors) carried out a range of activity to support residents to stay safe online. This included delivering talks at local libraries and supporting local events.
- During Q4, the **Trading Standards Service** completed 100% of its planned annual inspections of high-risk petroleum stores, high risk explosive stores and high-risk animal feed premises. The Service completed 98% of its planned annual inspections to high-risk food premises. Alongside this, significant resources have continued to be allocated towards tackling illegal vapes and the supply of vapes to children.
- A recent court [decision by Worthing Magistrates Court in January](#), upheld a decision to revoke the alcohol licence following a long running series of **investigations by Trading Standards**.

Our Council Performance Measures

Fire and Rescue Service Performance Measures

2. The following section provides KPI updates comparing performance over the last three periods (each measure will explain the reporting period).

Fire and Rescue		2023/24 Target	Performance Over The Last 3 Periods			DoT	Year End Position or Forecast
3	Measure: Fire Safety Order regulated buildings in West Sussex having received an audit under the Risk Based Inspection Programme. Measured cumulatively in each financial year, from 1st April. Reporting Frequency: Quarterly	1,000	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24		G
			G	G	G		
			515	753	1,032		
Performance Analysis: Mar-24: To exceed the target for Fire Safety Audits during 2023/24 is an incredible achievement considering that the Fire Safety Regulators spent 132 'person days' undertaking development training, to ensure that they are moving towards being fully qualified in role. What is also important to note over the course of the year, is that as the Regulators have progressed through their development training and increased their level of competency, the Fire and Rescue Service have seen a clear increase in the number of higher-risk audits that have been completed in line with our Risk Based Inspection Programme. By the year end, 42% of fire safety audit activity had been undertaken in risk-based inspection programme premises. At the start of the year, this was around 30%.							
Actions: As of Q4 the service have filled all existing vacancies in the department and are making effective use of the Protection Uplift Grant to temporarily employ new individuals to train and develop as part of succession planning for anticipated vacancies. As staff attain their fully qualified status, this will reduce the training burden, making it possible to spend more time undertaking fire safety audit activities.							

Fire and Rescue		2023/24 Target	Performance Over The Last 3 Periods			DoT	Year End Position or Forecast
10	<p>Measure: Number of Safe and Well Visits delivered to households with at least one vulnerability or risk factor. Measured cumulatively in each financial year, from 1st April.</p> <p>Reporting Frequency: Quarterly, Accumulative.</p>	5,000	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24		G
			G	G	G		
			2,622	3,828	5,335		
<p>Performance Analysis: Mar-24: In Q4, the Fire and Rescue Service completed 1,507 Safe and Well Visits (SWVs) and 340 home safety interventions. This is the highest total completed in a quarter by the service. In total 5,335 Safe and Well Visits and 1,333 home safety interventions were completed in the year 2023/24, which exceeds the target and demonstrates a service wide commitment to supporting the most vulnerable in our communities.</p> <p>Actions: The service continues to support referrals and requests for Safe and Well Visits through partnerships and local initiatives promoting them. Data is used to target those most at risk of being injured or dying in a fire.</p>							
42	<p>Measure: Percentage of 'critical fires' where the first appliance in attendance meets our emergency response standard</p> <p>Reporting Frequency: Quarterly.</p>	89.0%	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24		G
			G	G	G		
			95.5%	90.5%	90.0%		
<p>Performance Analysis: Mar-24: For the sixth consecutive quarter, performance continues to be consistently strong, exceeding the target set. Fire stations, including the new Day Crewed Seven stations, swiftly respond to community incidents, showcasing unwavering commitment to professional service delivery standards. The dedicated crews actively engage in fire safety initiatives, allocating more time to being in high-risk community areas, thereby enhancing our rapid response capability. These efforts are meticulously documented in Local Risk Management Plans, and the joint fire control efficiently allocates resources using the dynamic cover tool to support meeting our response standards.</p> <p>For 2023/24, the total percentage of 'critical fires' where the first appliance in attendance meets our emergency response standard was 91.7%.</p> <p>Actions: Monitoring and reviewing the performance data locally at stations through the Local Risk Management Plans via Service Delivery Governance meetings will continue, whilst seeking continuous improvements.</p>							
43	<p>Measure: Percentage of 'critical special service incidents' where the first appliance in attendance meets our emergency response standard</p> <p>Reporting Frequency: Quarterly.</p>	80.0%	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24		G
			G	G	G		
			84.0%	86.0%	83.7%		
<p>Performance Analysis: Mar-24: For the sixth consecutive quarter, our performance remains robust. The seamless integration of the Dynamic Cover Tool into our operational procedures ensures that detailed response time data is readily available to control room operators at district and local levels. This integration plays a critical role in efficiently mobilising fire engines to emergency calls.</p> <p>For 2023/24, the total percentage of 'critical special service incidents' where the first appliance in attendance meets our emergency response standard was 83.9%.</p> <p>Actions: The Fire and Rescue Service continues to work with partner agencies to help improve the time taken to transfer calls and information, enabling control staff to mobilise quicker. The service is also working hard to maximise the availability of retained fire engines at times of the day when it is known these incidents are most likely to occur, using the Crewing Optimisation Group and Retained Liaison Officer.</p>							

Community Support Performance Measures

Community Support		2023/24 Target	Performance Over The Last 3 Periods			DoT	Year End Position or Forecast
4	Measure: Percentage of interventions to identified West Sussex residents that demonstrate an increase in ability for resident to deal with scams Reporting Frequency: Quarterly	90.0%	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24	↓	G
			G	G	G		
			94.0%	97.6%	97.0%		
Performance Analysis: Mar-24: This is an extremely positive year end figure and shows the value that an intervention at household level can achieve. Actions: The service continues to work with partners to keep residents safe.							
33	Measure: Use of virtual/digital library services by residents Reporting Frequency: Quarterly, Accumulative	5.45m	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24	↑	G
			G	G	G		
			3.72m	5.81m	7.89m		
Performance Analysis: Mar-24: Increased use of YouTube channel as a result of brand-new video content produced as part of national Library On project. Actions: Continue to support growing demand though investment in eLibrary platforms and production of virtual and online library events content.							
34	Measure: Community Hub provides positive outcomes for residents at first point of contact Reporting Frequency: Quarterly	95.0%	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24	↓	G
			G	G	A		
			100%	98.0%	96.0%		
Performance Analysis: Mar-24: The Community Hub has continued to deliver a high-quality service to the residents of West Sussex providing information, guidance signposting a practical support focusing on Cost of Living and Household Support Fund enquiries. The County Council is continuing to regularly review the streamlining of processes as Household Support Fund moves towards a more digital focus. Actions: Although there is a reduction during this quarter, the service have achieved the 95% target based on current work.							

Finance Summary

Portfolio In Year Pressures and Mitigations

Pressures	(£m)	Mitigations and Underspending	(£m)	Year end budget variation (£m)
Fire and Rescue – Pressure relating to the reduction in Airwave grant funding	£0.193m	Fire and Rescue – Staffing and resources underspend	(£0.393m)	
Fire and Rescue – Price increases for required fleet vehicle parts	£0.234m	Fire and Rescue – Development and Organisational Training underspend	(£0.217m)	
Fire and Rescue Service - Subtotal	£0.427m		(£0.610m)	(£0.183m)
Community Support – Additional coroner costs projected following continued increase in the number of excess deaths since the pandemic	£0.470m	Community Support – Utilisation of grant to fund staff supporting grant funded activities	(£0.681m)	
Community Support – Transfer of Coroner Officers from Sussex Police	£0.220m	Community Support – Additional ceremonies income.	(£0.165m)	
Community Support – Gypsy and Traveller site increased reactive maintenance and utility costs	£0.139m	Edes House – Addition income generation from external functions	(£0.028m)	
		Other service variations	(£0.116m)	
Community Support Service - Subtotal	£0.829m		(£0.990m)	(£0.161m)
Community Support, Fire & Rescue Portfolio - Total	£1.256m		(£1.600m)	(£0.344m)

Financial Narrative on the Portfolio's Position

- The 2023/24 financial outturn position for the Community Support, Fire and Rescue Portfolio is an underspend of £0.344m, a reduction of £0.573m when compared to the December position. The main variations since the last quarter relate to the staffing and training underspends within the Fire and Rescue Service alongside an increase in the use of grant to fund staff supporting grant funded activities within Community Support services. Details are reported below.

Fire and Rescue

- The Fire and Rescue Service completed the 2023/24 financial year with a £0.183m underspend, £0.283m reduction when compared to the December position.
- The **Home Office Firelink Grant** allocation continues to be reduced each year by 20%. The service has had a 40% reduction in funding to date and are mitigating this pressure through ensuring the use of radios for service critical activity only; although this has only partly mitigated the impact of the reduction and has resulted in a £0.193m overspend.
- The cost of vehicle parts has risen exponentially this year which has led to the **Fleet maintenance** budget overspending by £0.234m

7. These service pressures have been actively mitigated by £0.393m of in-year savings arising from **managing resources** and £0.217m of underspend within the **Development and Organisational Training budget**.

Community Support

8. The Community Support Service completed the 2023/24 financial year with a £0.161m underspend, £0.290m reduction when compared to the December position.
9. The pressure on the **Coroner's Service** has continued during 2023/24, largely as a result of the continued increase in excess deaths since the pandemic which is being seen nationally. Additional costs associated with increased pathology, body storage, histology and coroner time have led to a £0.470m overspend.
10. The Coroner's Service welcomed the **transfer of Coroner Officers from Sussex Police** in April 2023. The costs associated with the transfer totalled £0.220m.
11. Additional costs and loss of income relating to the County Council's **Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Sites** resulted in the budget overspending by £0.139m. This is largely due to additional reactive maintenance works required on the sites.
12. Community Support received a **number of grants** in-year which are administered by the service. Following a recent reconciliation, £0.681m of staffing costs have been reimbursed from the grant receipts to reflect the staff supporting grant funded activities.
13. Additional income of £0.165m was received within the **Registration Service** due to extra ceremonies taking place during the year, alongside this, a further £0.028m of additional income was generated from external functions at **Edes House**.

Proposed Carry Forward Requests

14. A number of carry forward requests have been processed during the closure of the accounts, including the following items within the Community Support, Fire and Rescue Portfolio:

	2023/24 Carry Forward Requests	Amount
Fire and Rescue Service	Protection Uplift Grant. Funding received to drive the improvement in the capability and capacity of the Fire and Rescue Service to deliver their protection function to support a safer built environment.	£0.161m

	2023/24 Carry Forward Requests	Amount
	Building Safety Regulator – New Burdens Grant. Home Office grant of £0.057m has been received to fund building safety training. £0.014m of grant remains unspent at the year end and will be utilised in 2024/25 in accordance with Home Office requirements.	£0.014m
Community Support	Community Support. Offensive Weapons Act 2019 – Trading Standards – New Burdens Grant. The grant is to meet the costs of the statutory obligations that have been placed on Trading Standards as the enforcement agency. Grant funding not received until March 2024.	£0.010m

15. The following carry forward balance from 2022/23 which is currently within reserves also remains available use in 2024/25.

	Previous Carry Forward Balances Available In 2024/25	Amount
Fire and Rescue Service	Marauding Terrorist Grant. This grant funds the specialist training in casualty management for Fire and Rescue Services. Funds are required for 2024/25 to ensure all Firefighters are adequately trained.	£0.029m
	Protection Uplift Grant. Funding has been provided to drive the improvement in the capability and capacity of the Fire and Rescue Service to deliver their protection function to support a safer built environment. Remaining funds are required in 2024/25.	£0.081m
	Bequest to Worthing Fire Station. A generous bequest from a member of the public has been received with a requirement that funds are spent on Worthing Fire Station. Plans are now in place and the remaining allocation will be spent in 2024/25.	£0.094m
Community Support	Trading Standards - Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) Restricted Funds. Plans have been developed for a number of initiatives to ensure these funds are reinvested into tackling crime and supporting the public.	£0.087m

Savings Delivery Update

16. The portfolio planned to deliver £0.670m of savings in 2023/24. Details relating to each saving is reported in the table below:

Saving Activity	Year	Saving to be delivered in 2023/24 (£000)	March 2024		Narrative
Community Support - Optimise Use of Grants	2023/24	£0.200m	£0.200m	B	Saving delivered.
Resilience and Emergency Team - Structural Review	2023/24	£0.100m	£0.100m	B	Saving delivered.

Saving Activity	Year	Saving to be delivered in 2023/24 (£000)	March 2024		Narrative
Staffing vacancy increase in vacancy factor from 5% to 6%	2023/24	£0.370m	£0.370m	B	Saving delivered.

Savings Key:

R Significant Risk **A** At Risk **G** On Track **B** Delivered

Capital Programme

Summary - Capital

17. The Community Support, Fire and Rescue Capital Programme; as approved by County Council in February 2023, agreed a programme totalling £9.089m for 2023/24. Budget of £4.864m originally profiled to spend in 2023/24, was accelerated into 2022/23, revising the capital programme to £4.225m.
18. During the year, the portfolio spent £1.656m, a decrease of £2.569m when compared to the revised capital programme.
19. The portfolio's capital programme contains six projects. Three of the projects are in delivery and three are practically complete and are in their retention phase whilst snagging and cosmetic works are completed. The performance and financial details for each are reported below.

	Community Support, Fire Rescue Capital Projects	Performance RAG Status			Total Project Budget	Previous Years Expenditure To 2022/23	2023/24 Expenditure	In Flight Remaining Project Budget
		Time	Quality	Cost				
1	Project: Fire and Rescue Equipment Block Programme - Block	G	G	G	£0.377m	N/A	£0.352m	£0.025m
	Latest Estimated Completion Date: On-Going			Project Phase: In Delivery				
	Narrative: Overall programme is on track.							
2	Project: Fleet Replacement Programme - Block	G	G	G	£4.072m	N/A	£0.135m	£3.937m
	Latest Estimated Completion Date: On-Going			Project Phase: In Delivery				
	Narrative: Programme is currently progressing to plan although there are some issues in relation to cost being reviewed.							

	Community Support, Fire Rescue Capital Projects	Performance RAG Status			Total Project Budget	Previous Years Expenditure To 2022/23	2023/24 Expenditure	In Flight Remaining Project Budget
		Time	Quality	Cost				
3	Project: Live Training Centre and Horsham Fire Station	G	G	G	£25.608m	£23.935m	£1.036m	£0.637m
	Latest Estimated Completion Date: July 2023			Project Phase: Practically Complete – In Retention				
	Narrative: The project is currently in the defect’s liability period. Defects, as and when arise, are actively being reported to the contractor.							
4	Project: Fire and Rescue Estates Improvement Programme	G	G	G	£1.852m	£-	£-	£1.852m
	Latest Estimated Completion Date: TBC			Project Phase: In Delivery				
	Narrative: An initial introductory meeting with the designers has taken place. Site visits have been booked for the end of April 2024.							
5	Project: Worthing Community Hub	G	G	G	£2.852m	£2.693m	£0.103m	£0.056m
	Latest Estimated Completion Date: May 2022			Project Phase: Practically Complete - In Retention				
	Narrative: Project complete.							
6	Project: Libraries Digital Asset	G	G	G	£0.030m	£-	£0.030m	£-
	Latest Estimated Completion Date: March 2024			Project Phase: Practically Complete				
	Narrative: Project complete.							

20. A summary of the latest Capital Programme Budget Monitor is reported in **Appendix 4** and full details of all individual schemes are set out in the Budget Report published in February 2023.

Risk

21. The following table summarises the risks within the Corporate Risk Register that would have a direct impact on the portfolio. Risks to other portfolios are specified within the respective portfolio sections.

Risk Number	Risk Description	Previous Quarter Score	Current Score
CR77	If the council have ineffective or untested disaster recovery arrangements internally and in collaboration with partners/third parties, there is a risk that we will not be adequately prepared to respond to and recover from unplanned or unexpected serious/critical civil or malicious incidents (e.g., significant local or regional power outages, CBRN, pandemics, fuel shortages). This may lead to the council being unable to deliver or ensure access to core services.	NEW	10

22. Further detail on all risks can be found in **Appendix 5** - Corporate Risk Register Summary. Full details of the latest Risk Register, including actions and mitigations can be found under the County Council's [Regulation, Audit and Accounts Committee Agenda](#) website.