

Community Support, Fire and Rescue Portfolio - Summary

Performance Summary

1. Performance highlights this quarter include:

Fire and Rescue Service

- On 14th October, the **Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) questionnaire was published**, which will ensure that the service hears from communities about the risks that concern them the most ahead of the development of the consultation for the next CRMP, which will run from 2026–2030. These are the early stages of ensuring that the Fire and Rescue Service meet its statutory duty to prepare a Community Risk Management Plan which sets out the steps taken to try and prevent emergency situations from arising, as well as the measures that are in place to respond to an emergency situation. This information will help the organisation to make sure it has the greatest understanding of the risks and challenges that exist within the county and allows the service to plan for the future to ensure that it has the right resources, in the right place, at the right time, to help keep the public safe.
- West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service are **leading an aggregated procurement to standardise Breathing Apparatus and ancillary equipment (BA) on behalf of the 4F Group** consisting of West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, East Sussex Fire Authority, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority. Following the completion of the procurement process, the Chief Fire Officer will seek to award the contract for the purchase of this equipment to the bidder submitting the most economical and technologically suitable tender, following extensive practical evaluation processes.
- The Fire and Rescue Service has a rolling programme of fleet replacement and is proposing to **replace six of the oldest appliances**, all of which are between 16 and 20 years old. The Cabinet Member for Community Support, Fire and Rescue has agreed the commencement of a procurement with delegated authority allocated to the Chief Fire Officer to award the contract(s).

Community Support

- There have been **37 recorded incidents of disruptive or anti-social behaviour this quarter within West Sussex Libraries**. A new Library Welfare Officer post was appointed to, and the new starter joined the team in December. This new post will work in libraries where disruptive behaviour is a particular challenge, working with challenging customers, supporting frontline staff responding and coordinating with local community safety partners.
- The **Library Service** has worked with 18 other services in the South-East region to commission a research consultancy to undertake an impact and evaluation study to determine the benefits of library services and interventions in relation to reducing demand for adult social care. Shared

Intelligence, a research consultancy agency with extensive experience in local government, health and libraries sectors, was appointed in December. Field study work in libraries will be undertaken this spring/summer, with a final report expected by October 2025.

- The **Registration Service** delivered 724 ceremonies, registered 2,109 deaths, 2,038 births and welcomed 285 new citizens during Q3. Scrutiny of all Medical Certificates of Cause of Death (MCCDs) by the Medical Examiner is now a statutory requirement. This new process has been operating well during the quarter with the service working closely with the Medical Examiner officers and Coroners Service. During the busy winter period, some families have been waiting up to three weeks to receive their phone call from the Medical Examiner, however, once the paperwork is issued to the registrars, there has been good availability across the county for same or next day appointments.
- The **Countering Extremism Team** develop and deliver Prevent Training as part of the County Council's statutory obligations. During Q3, 473 people received Prevent Training which included West Sussex County Council frontline staff, district and borough staff and Councillors, school and college staff, NHS staff and members of local community groups.
- In addition, training and awareness raising on **Modern Slavery** remains a prevention priority, with 19 training sessions, webinars, and face-to-face events, held during Q3 reaching over 430 people from a range of audiences. Sessions included 6 safeguarding webinars delivered to 122 Taxi Drivers and a Safeguarding Week input on exploitation for 40 professional colleagues.
- The County Council was allocated £4.870m of **Household Support Fund grant** for the period 1st October 2024 to 31 March 2025. Following the Key Decision Report OKD16 (21/22), of the funding distributed, a large portion has been allocated internally and to key partners to support the wider community. During Q3, the Community Hub received a total of 6,278 applications from a combination of public and professional referrals. Funds of £0.646m have been distributed to support over 21,500 free school meal eligible children with supermarket vouchers via E-vouchers during the Christmas period.

Over the full Household Support Grant fund period, more than £1.3m has been allocated to Citizens Advice to continue their Energy Advice Service, focusing on supporting individual long-term needs, benefit entitlement to increase income, energy efficiency and debt management. Additional funds from this scheme continue to be distributed in accordance with the guidance by a range of partner agencies including District and Boroughs, Carers Support West Sussex, Foodbanks, and other community-based organisations.

- **During Q3, Trading Standards** officers have undertaken a number of successful operations which included:
 - Illicit tobacco and illegal vapes were seized from stores in Crawley, Chichester, Horsham, Bognor Regis and Haywards Heath. In total 13,960 cigarettes with a street value of £83,760, based on £6 per packet, were seized along with 9.6 kg of hand rolling tobacco, snuff, oral tobacco and nicotine pouches.



- Under-age “test purchasing” was carried out in Lancing, Worthing and East Preston in response to intelligence received. No sales resulted from this test.
- Three alcohol licence review applications made by Trading Standards were heard. One review resulted in four weeks suspension and conditions added to their licence, one resulted in the licence being revoked and the third resulted in conditions being voluntarily added to the licence.
- Trading standards are now also working closely with HMRC and can refer seizures of illicit tobacco to HMRC for a civil sanction to be issued to the trader. This is a good example of an alternative enforcement action that is quick and efficient, can avoid costly and lengthy criminal prosecutions for the County Council and disrupts the illegal trade locally. During Q3, two civil sanctions were issued, one Crawley trader received a £2,500 fine and one in Worthing a £5,000 fine.

Our Council Performance Measures


Fire and Rescue Service Performance Measures

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

Fire and Rescue		2024/25 Target	Performance Over the Last 3 Periods			DoT	Year End Forecast
3	Measure: Fire Safety Order regulated buildings in West Sussex having received an audit under the Risk Based Inspection Programme Reporting Frequency: Quarterly, Accumulative Aim High Measure	1,000	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	▶	G
	G		G	G			
Performance Analysis: Dec-24: Q3 has continued to demonstrate a strong performance, recording that more fire safety audits have been conducted than was achieved in the same period in the previous year. This equates to the Service being 125 audits ahead of schedule. Actions: Whilst the number of audits that have been undertaken in Q3 is satisfactory, the percentage of audits being undertaken from the Risk Based Inspection Programme has fallen further to 51%. This continues to be a result of the reduction of Fire Safety Regulators currently qualified to audit higher risk premises. We will continue to actively review this element of our performance to try and identify alternative ways of working that still meet the requirements of the national competency framework.							
10	Measure: Number of Safe and Well Visits delivered to households with at least one vulnerability or risk factor Reporting Frequency: Quarterly, Accumulative Aim High Measure	5,000	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	▶	G
	G		G	G			
			1,552	3,231	4,668		

Fire and Rescue		2024/25 Target	Performance Over the Last 3 Periods			DoT	Year End Forecast
<p>Performance Analysis: Dec-24: In Q3, a total of 1,437 Safe and Well Visits were completed. This is slightly lower than the total for the previous two quarters, however this was expected in Q3 due to the difficulties of gaining access to people's homes during the festive period. Despite this, the service has already achieved 93% of the annual target with a quarter of the year remaining. An additional 234 Home Fire Safety Interventions were also completed by the service.</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 with priority given for a Safe and Well Visit.</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> <p>Aim High Measure</p>	89.0%	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24		G
			G	A	G		
			91.9%	87.8%	91.1%		
<p>Performance Analysis: Dec-24: Performance is strong for this quarter, positively exceeding the previous three years Q3 performance. Understanding the risks in our community and responding more effectively and efficiently remains a focus, with utilising the dynamic cover tool and Service Delivery Support Team.</p> <p>Actions: Performance monitoring will continue to be shared at all levels through the Service Delivery Governance meetings. The service will continue to engage with communities delivering the co-created Local Risk Management Plans targeting risk.</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> <p>Aim High Measure</p>	80.0%	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24		G
			G	G	G		
			86.3%	80.5%	80.9%		
<p>Performance Analysis: Dec-24: Performance has remained consistently high. Embedding the Dynamic Cover Tool has been critical in effectively deploying fire engines to emergencies, with Control Room operators and managers at district and local levels having immediate access to detailed response time information.</p> <p>Actions: Working with partners and stakeholders enables continuous improvement in this area, and we continue to focus on optimising the availability of retained fire engines during peak incident times through the utilisation of our Crewing Optimisation Group, County Cover and Retained Liaison Officers.</p>							

Community Support Performance Measures

Community Support		2024/25 Target	Performance Over The Last 3 Periods			DoT	Year End Forecast
33	<p>Measure: Use of virtual/digital library services by residents</p> <p>Reporting Frequency: Quarterly, Accumulative</p> <p>Aim High Measure</p>	8.8 million	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24		G
			G	G	G		
			2.273m	4.548m	6.720m		
<p>Performance Analysis: Dec-24: Customer demand for virtual/digital library services continues to grow, especially across library platforms which customers use to download eBooks. The new Instagram channel launched earlier this year and has continued to grow in reach this quarter. The Q3 reports a decline on the use of library services when compared to Q2, where the Summer Reading Challenge drove significant increased use, but the service is reporting a year-on-year increase compared to Q3 2023/24.</p> <p>Actions: Continue to support growing demand through investment in eLibrary platforms and production of virtual and online library event content.</p>							
34	<p>Measure: Community Hub provides positive outcomes for residents at first point of contact</p> <p>Reporting Frequency: Quarterly</p>	95.0%	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24		G
			G	G	G		

Community Support		2024/25 Target	Performance Over The Last 3 Periods			DoT	Year End Forecast
	Aim High Measure		99%	100%	100%		
<p>Performance Analysis: Dec-24: Achieving 100% in Q3, the Community Hub continues 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. Continuing to regularly review the streamlining of processes as Household Support Fund moves the service to a more digital focus.</p> <p>Actions: All calls reviewed through quality assurance assessments in December achieved 100% first call resolution. This demonstrates excellent performance in addressing customer needs promptly and reflects positively on the team's skills, efficiency, and ability to provide comprehensive solutions in real time.</p>							
63	<p>Measure: Percentage of identified targets receiving intervention by Trading Standards in relation to regulating the supply of tobacco and alcohol</p> <p>Reporting Frequency: Quarterly</p> <p>Aim High Measure</p>	100%	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24		R
		R	R	R			
		60%	65%	63%			
	<p>Performance Analysis: Dec-24: The Service continues to put dedicated resources into intervening with every trader against whom there is intelligence that suggests they are involved in the illicit supply of tobacco, vapes and alcohol. The volume of intelligence received with the resources available means that the 100% target for interventions has not proved possible to this point and will be unlikely to be so at year end.</p> <p>Actions: Target to be adjusted for 2025/26 business plan, which will also be influenced by whether or not Public Health confirm continued funding for the two dedicated enforcement officers beyond the fixed term contract end date.</p>						

Finance Summary

Portfolio In Year Pressures and Mitigations

Pressures	(£m)	Mitigations and Underspending	(£m)	Projected Year End Budget Variation (£m)
Pressure relating to the reduction in Firelink Grant used to fund Airwave system	£0.440m	Projected workforce underspend	(£0.415m)	
School SLA Income Shortfall – Extinguisher Maintenance and Commercial Trading Services	£0.100m	ELT In Year Action - Hold One-Off Opportunity - Tax Refund	(£0.095m)	
Impact of Legislative changes to Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) Checks	£0.050m			
Fire and Rescue Service - Subtotal	£0.590m		(£0.510m)	£0.080m
Coroners Service – Increasing service delivery costs	£0.370m	Registration Service – Additional Ceremony Income, increase in Statutory Certificate Fees	(£0.300m)	
Gypsy and Travellers – Increase in additional Reactive Maintenance	£0.200m	Additional Edes House Income	(£0.025m)	
		Greater Optimisation of Grant - In Year Action (ELT)	(£0.210m)	
Community Support Service - Subtotal	£0.570m		(£0.535m)	£0.035m
Community Support, Fire & Rescue Portfolio - Total	£1.160m		(£1.045m)	£0.115m

Financial Narrative on the Portfolio's Position

3. As at the end of December, the forecast for the Community Support, Fire and Rescue Portfolio is a projected overspend of £0.115m, a decrease in the projection of £0.405m when compared to September.

Fire and Rescue

4. The Fire and Rescue Service is currently projecting a £0.080m overspend, a reduction of £0.020m when compared to September.
5. As previously reported, the **Home Office Firelink Grant** allocation continues to be reduced each year by 20% and the service has had a 60% reduction in funding to date. Latest information suggests that there will be a £0.440m shortfall this financial year due to the reducing grant and increasing service charge costs for the Airwave system.
6. Similar to other County Council Services, an **income shortfall relating to the buy-back from schools** for fire extinguisher and commercial services is forecast. It is projected that there will be a £0.1m shortfall this financial year.
7. Recent stricter **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks** for Firefighters is expected to result in a £0.050m additional pressure for 2024/25. These changes are designed to increase standards and improve safeguarding and the quality of the Fire and Rescue Service nationally.
8. These pressures have been actively mitigated by £0.415m of **in-year savings arising from managing resources**. It should be noted that although the County Council has placed corporate workforce controls on recruitment, front-line staffing for the Fire and Rescue Service is exempt.
9. In addition, following direction from the Executive Leadership Team to enact in year saving opportunities, a one-off £0.095m has been released as part of the Action Plan in relation to a **tax contribution**.
10. The continued increasing costs associated with **Fleet Maintenance** is of concern, however the service is actively reviewing commitments to ensure costs do not exceed the set budget and will defer non-essential work where possible until next financial year.

Community Support

11. The Community Support Service is currently projecting a £0.035m overspend, a reduction of £0.385m when compared to September.
12. As previously reported, the pressure experienced in the **Coroner's Service** in 2023/24 has continued to increase with additional costs associated with increased pathology, body storage, histology, toxicology, post mortems and coroner time, leading to a forecast £0.370m overspend.

13. Additional reactive maintenance works required across the County Council's **Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Sites** has resulted in a forecast £0.2m overspend.
14. Additional income of £0.3m, an increase of £0.150m when compared to September, is now forecast within the **Registration Service** due to an increase in ceremonies scheduled to take place during the year as well as additional income from the statutory fee for certifications which increased from £11.00 to £12.50 from 1st April.
15. The income expectation in relation to **Edes House** has increased by £0.025m this quarter.
16. As part of the Executive Leadership Team's In Year Action Plan, the Communities Team have actively maximised the opportunity to **utilise grants** towards eligible expenditure, releasing £0.210m of funding towards the overall overspending position.
17. The increased turnover allowance set as part of the 2023/24 budget is now becoming an increasing pressure within the **Library Service**. The immediate post-pandemic reduction in footfall allowed for greater flexibility around staff cover; however, as library customers increased to a broadly similar level to that seen pre-pandemic, the ability to flex staffing to cover vacancies has reduced. This pressure has increased due to the rising incidences of anti-social behaviour.

Savings Delivery Update

18. There are £0.575m of savings to be delivered within the portfolio in 2024/25. Details relating to each saving is reported in the table below:

Saving Activity	Year	Saving to be delivered in 2024/25	December 2024		Narrative
Fire and Rescue – Prevention and Protection – Review of risk reduction areas	2024/25	£0.150m	£0.150m	G	Saving on track.
Fire and Rescue – Staffing, Training and Equipment	2024/25	£0.175m	£0.175m	B	Saving delivered.
Fire and Rescue - Additional Income from Horsham Training Centre	2024/25	£0.150m	£0.150m	G	Saving on track.
Community Support – Record Office - Opening Hours	2024/25	£0.100m	£0.100m	G	Saving on track.

Savings Key:

R Significant Risk
 A At Risk
 G On Track
 B Delivered

Capital Programme

Summary - Capital

19. The Community Support, Fire and Rescue Capital Programme; as approved by County Council in February 2024, agreed a programme totalling £3.025m for 2024/25. Budget of £0.141m originally profiled to spend in 2024/25, was accelerated into 2023/24, revising the capital programme to £2.884m.
20. Since this time, the profiled spend has decreased overall by £0.523m, to give a current year end projection for 2024/25 of £2.361m.
21. The portfolio's capital programme contains six projects. Four of the projects are in delivery and two are complete with one of these projects within its 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 2023/24	2024/25 Expenditure	In Flight Remaining Project Budget
		Time	Quality	Cost				
1	Project: Fire and Rescue Equipment Block Programme - Block	G	G	G	£0.255m	N/A	£0.092m	£0.163m
	Latest Estimated Completion Date: On-Going			Project Phase: In Delivery		Direction of Travel: ►		
	Narrative: Overall programme is on track.							
2	Project: Fleet Replacement Programme - Block	G	G	G	£3.937m	N/A	£0.309m	£3.628m
	Latest Estimated Completion Date: On-Going			Project Phase: In Delivery		Direction of Travel: ►		
	Narrative: Overall programme is on track.							
3	Project: Fire & Rescue Estates Improvement Programme	G	G	G	£3.150m	£-	£0.092m	£3.058m
	Latest Estimated Completion Date: On-Going			Project Phase: In Delivery		Direction of Travel: ►		
	Narrative: Overall programme is on track.							
4	Project: Joint Fire Control Infrastructure Renewal and System Improvements	G	G	G	£0.087m	£-	£-	£0.087m
	Latest Estimated Completion Date: 2025			Project Phase: In Delivery		Direction of Travel: ▲		
	Narrative: New Project.							
5	Project: Live Training Centre and Horsham Fire Station	B	B	G	£25.608m	£24.971m	£0.042m	£0.595m

	Community Support, Fire Rescue Capital Projects	Performance RAG Status			Total Project Budget	Previous Years Expenditure To 2023/24	2024/25 Expenditure	In Flight Remaining Project Budget
		Time	Quality	Cost				
	Latest Estimated Completion Date: N/A	Project Phase: Complete – In Retention			Direction of Travel: ▶			
	Narrative: Project complete. Defects and snagging works are being addressed.							
	Project: Worthing Community Hub	B	B	B	£2.799m	£2.796m	£0.003m	£-
6	Latest Estimated Completion Date: N/A	Project Phase: Complete			Direction of Travel: ▶			
	Narrative: Project complete.							

Key:

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

22. 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 2024.

Risk

23. 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.	10	10

24. 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.