



West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service

Annual Report & Statement of Assurance 2014 - 2015



Foreword



This report covers the year from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 and highlights how West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service (WSFRS) performed in the key areas of protection, prevention and emergency response.

It outlines how the Service met its financial, governance and operational commitments under the Fire & Rescue National Framework.

Although this document refers to the last 12 months it covers a period in which a huge amount of work has been completed to redesign the service for years to come, as part of a programme known as Future Fire and Rescue.

This is a comprehensive review developed to ensure the Service, a key part of our new Communities and Public Protection Directorate, can support the county council's Future West Sussex vision and can manage its resources amidst the toughest financial climate we have faced in years.

From April 2015 there will be a huge amount of change within WSFRS. We have always been proud of our fire and rescue service and believe the new ways of working coming in now will ensure it continues to provide a first class service for our communities for years to come.

David Barling
Cabinet Member for Residents' Services



Introduction



West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service is one of 14 fire services managed within a local government setting.

However, we believe we are the first to play such a critical role at the heart of a local authority.

As well as being your Chief Fire Officer my role is Executive Director for Communities and Public Protection – a new directorate that wants to help ensure we can all live and work in safe, strong and resilient communities.

The directorate brings together a range of skills, backgrounds and experience that we believe will help achieve that – and help West Sussex County Council succeed in the priority outcomes it has detailed in its Future West Sussex plan.

This annual report will help you see how we are already making a difference, by expanding the type of work that we do and delivering prevention work, hand-in-hand with the communities we serve.

When you need us, rest assured, our professional and dedicated teams will continue to deliver the first class fire and rescue service the county expects and deserves.

And as we embrace new ways of working during the next financial year I am sure, with your support, we can help make West Sussex an even greater place to be.

Sean Ruth

Executive Director Communities and Public Protection and Chief Fire Officer



Our main duties are outlined in the Fire & Rescue Services Act and are summarised under Our Structure (see page 6).



The communities we serve

• Our county

West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service serves a population of more than 800,000 residents, as well as looking after those who work in or visit the county.

Most settlements are along the coast, or in Mid Sussex, close to the M23/A23 corridor.

Crawley, closely followed by Worthing, have the largest populations, with more than 100,000 residents each. Our headquarters is in the county town of Chichester.

As well as major road and rail links, the county is home to one of the UK's busiest airports, Gatwick, which handles 34million passengers every year.

Between 2001 and 2011 the population of West Sussex grew by 6.9 per cent, with the number of those aged over 65 and over 85 growing by 13,750 and 3,437 respectively.

• Our heritage

West Sussex has a wide range of scenery, including Wealden, Downland and coastal.

It has a number of stately homes, including Goodwood, Petworth House and Uppark, along with castles, such as Arundel Castle and Bramber Castle.

Over half the county is protected countryside, including the South Downs National Park, offering residents and visitors beautiful scenery and great opportunities to get out and about and explore.

• Our responsibilities

The Fire Authority also has roles and responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to work in partnership to plan for, and respond to, civil emergencies.

Our fleet of fire engines, along with specialist rescue and support appliances, gives us the capability to respond to a range of emergencies, including floods, chemical spills, trapped people and animals, and building collapses.

Our Technical Rescue Unit provides specialist skills that can be deployed locally on a daily basis, but also supports national and international resilience with a key role in the UK's International Search and Rescue Team.



• National Framework

The Fire and Rescue National Framework sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in England. It states high level expectations, with priorities for fire and rescue authorities to:

- Identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related activities their areas face, make provision for prevention and protection activities and respond to incidents appropriately
- Work in partnership with their communities and a wide range of partners to deliver their service
- Be accountable to communities for the service they provide.

The framework describes clear roles and responsibilities for major incidents where local resources may require additional support and details the Government's strategic role for national resilience, built on the basis of local professional expertise and understanding of risk.



Overview of Fire and Rescue Service

• Our structure

West Sussex County Council (WSCC) is the fire authority for West Sussex and is responsible for delivering the following services:

- Firefighting and rescue
- Protecting people and property from fire
- Promoting fire safety in the home
- Provision for special service emergencies - such as road traffic collisions, flooding or incidents involving hazardous substances

West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service (WSFRS) carries out these functions as part of the Communities and Public Protection Directorate.

The Executive Director for Communities and Public Protection, Chief Fire Officer Sean Ruth, is responsible for operational delivery, while the WSCC Cabinet Member for Residents' Services, David Barling, makes strategic political decisions.

• Our people

On the 1 April 2015 we changed the way we crew our fire stations. However, for the period covered by this report, we provided a fire and rescue service across West Sussex via three crewing systems:

Wholetime, providing an immediate response 24-hours-a-day, alongside community safety work.

Retained, where the firefighters' primary employment is often outside of the fire service but they provide an agreed level of 'on call' cover via a pager system.

Variable, providing an immediate response and carrying out community safety work during core hours from Monday to Friday, with additional cover provided by Retained crews.

From firefighter to Chief Fire Officer at the end of this financial year we employed 329 operational staff and had the full time equivalent of 227 retained crew, along with support staff and community volunteers. The excellent service we provide is a direct result of the dedication and hard work of every member of the West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service team.

• Management of risk

Our primary role is to keep West Sussex safe. We do this through a combination of prevention, protection and response activities, coordinated via our Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

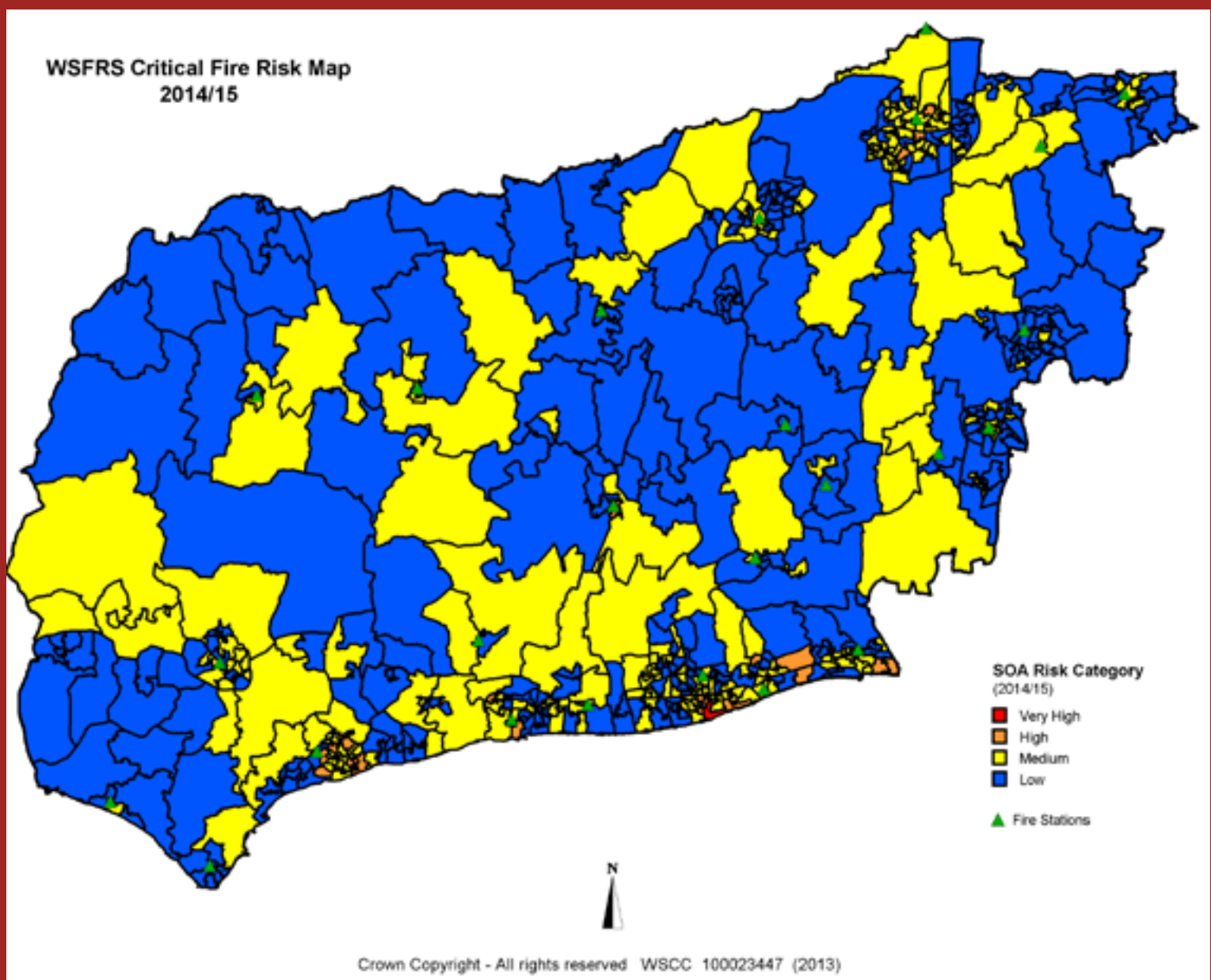
As a service we have to understand and identify how we should manage our resources according to the greatest risks and we monitor this information constantly.

We learn from incidents we have responded to – we record information about every 999 call we receive and analyse where, why and how incidents have occurred to help us understand what might happen in the future.

We also use the local knowledge of our firefighters and officers, along with the latest modelling software, demographic profiling, census data and information from our partner agencies.

All of this information is pulled together in a Critical Fire Risk Map (see below), which is updated every year, based on rolling data from the previous three years.

You will see most of the county is classified as low, or medium, risk. Where small pockets of high, or very high, risk are identified we can target our resources in proportion to those needs.





Our purpose

Our mission is to make West Sussex a safer place to live, work and visit.

West Sussex County Council has set out a clear plan of what it wants the county to look like in five years' time – this is the Future West Sussex vision.

The council's vision is for strong, vibrant communities; helping people to help themselves, and each other.



West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service has a key role in achieving this.

Our Strategic Aims are to:

- **Reduce the number of emergency incidents and their consequences**
- **Work with our partners to build safer, stronger and more resilient communities**
- **Provide value for money services**
- **Ensure we have safe, healthy and competent employees**
- **Reduce our impact on the environment**
- **Support the management of risk, whether corporate, community or through change (County Council wide)**

Our performance

Incidents

The total number of incidents we were called to continues to fall. **We attended 8,566 incidents in West Sussex during 2014/2015.** Around half turned out to be false alarms, including calls of good intent, accidental alarm activations and malicious calls.

Some performance data will fluctuate from year to year however incidents, overall, have reduced steadily over the last four years and the 2014/15 figure is an **8.6 per cent reduction** on the previous year's figure of 9,377 incidents.

How we responded

In 2014/15 critical fires and critical special service incidents made up 17 per cent of the total calls we attended. Our Service Plan sets out the response we expect to achieve to this type of incident, which we meet in the vast majority of cases. During this period our first appliance met this critical fires benchmark 88 per cent of the time (a fraction down on the 89 per cent achieved the previous year). Our second appliance met this target for 79 per cent of incidents (down from 85 per cent the previous year). Our appliances met the critical special services benchmark on 77 per cent of occasions.

The biggest single factor on attendance times is the availability of our retained crews. Availability of retained resources has been an issue, nationally, for some years but was also affected during this period by on-going industrial action across the country.

So how are we staffed?

For the period covered by this report we provided a fire and rescue service across West Sussex via three crewing systems: Wholetime – providing an immediate response 24-hours a day, alongside community safety work; Retained – where firefighters provide an agreed level of on-call cover via a pager system; Variable – providing an immediate response and carrying out community safety work during core hours from Monday to Friday, supported with additional cover from retained crews.

We also have support staff in a number of key roles.

Outside of periods of industrial action we manage our resources to ensure wholetime and variable crewed appliances (during core hours) are always available.

Our retained appliances were available 62 per cent of the time. This is lower than the 72 per cent availability achieved in the previous year but the impact of industrial action during this period makes any comparison difficult.

Improving the retained duty system is a key priority for WSFRS and we have established four high-level workstreams to develop future options for the service.

Our calls

False alarms from automatic fire alarms (**AFA**s) can impact on our ability to attend other emergencies and delay our community safety work. We work closely with the organisations who manage the types of properties most likely to have AFAs to reduce false alarms. **We attended 1,630 AFAs in non-domestic properties in 2014/15** (down from 1,652 and 1,661 in the previous two years).

Starting fires puts lives at risk. We work closely with a range of organisations to discourage those at risk of offending and we support the police with prosecutions when **deliberate fires** do occur. **There were 507 deliberate fires in 2014/15** (down from 584 in 2013/14 and 751 in 2012/13). Our extensive education programmes also work to discourage hoax calls, as these can affect our response to real emergencies. **Last year we attended 90 hoax calls**, which is less than the 100 and 108 in each of the previous two years. There were a further 135 calls we did not attend, thanks to intelligent challenging of information from call operators.

We put a great deal of effort into preventing fires in the home but, sadly, **accidental dwelling fires** do still occur and incidents involving cooking and cigarettes are the leading causes. Having a working smoke alarm can be the difference between life and death. Looking



at all accidental dwelling fires, from very minor incidents, like burnt food, to more serious fires – we attended **457 incidents** last year, that's a very slight increase of 6 per cent on the 433 in 2013/14, but still below the 484 in 2012/13. As far as non-domestic properties are concerned, we work closely with local businesses to promote understanding and awareness of regulations and their legal responsibilities and provide advice through face-to-face meetings, seminars and events. We were called to **188 fires in non-domestic properties** last year, that's five per cent more than the 179 incidents in the previous year, but less than the 219 incidents we went to in 2012/13.

Community safety is at the heart of all of our work. Statistically, those most at risk of being **injured by fire in their home** include the elderly and those living alone, populations which both continue to grow, and the majority of these incidents started in the kitchen. As you would expect, we focus much of our prevention work in these areas. There were **43 accidental dwelling fire injuries** in 2014/15, the majority of these were slight injuries, with seven classed as more serious. This is slightly up on the 33 injuries in 2013/14 and 37 injuries the year before. Unfortunately, we know these numbers will fluctuate and we are confident our community safety work will continue to drive down the total number of incidents we are called to.

Thankfully, there were **no fatalities from accidental fires in the home in 2014/15**, the first time this has been recorded in West Sussex for many years. Sadly, there were four fire-related deaths – one is being investigated

as murder; the others are a suspected suicide, a road collision and a smoking incident at a residential care home. There were a total of eight fire fatalities the year before, including four involving accidental fires in the home.

We deal with the consequences of road traffic collisions (RTCs) on a daily basis and people in West Sussex are four times more likely to be killed in a road accident than they are in a fire. We work tirelessly with a range of partners to reduce the number of RTCs and the enormous human and economic cost they create. Again, these figures do fluctuate and **we attended 462 road traffic collisions** last year where we were required to take action (a very slight increase from 460 the year before). This figure comes at a time that police statistics for the total number of RTCs across West Sussex are showing a small increase.

Our community work

Our safety and prevention work is helping to reduce the total number of incidents we are called to. Last year we carried out **6,516 Home Safety Visits**, that's more than 1,000 properties more than in 2013/14. Most of these visits were to households defined as high priority. Last year **we fitted more than 4,000 standard smoke alarms and 3,749 community fire links** but we take a common sense approach to look at all of the risks a person may be facing. Where we find an individual who needs other types of help we provide advice or guidance or can, in some circumstances, refer them to other agencies for support. Our community work is described in more detail on pages 18 and 19.



Financial performance

- **Our budget**

The cost of running WSFRS in 2014-15 was £27.7million.

Funding for WSFRS is provided by WSCC and comes from two main sources:

- **Grant funding from central Government**

- **Council Tax**

There is no additional precept for fire and rescue services on your council tax bill in West Sussex. The fire and rescue budget is considered as part of the wider provision of county council services.

Over the course of the year we achieved our budget reduction target of £820,000. However, our total running cost includes a one-off additional pension cost, met from central county council funds but reflected

in specific fire service figures below. Our budget also reflects additional costs from nationally agreed inflationary pay awards.

Running costs 2014-15 £27.7million

Firefighting and Rescue Operations	£21,855,361
Community Safety	£5,381,109
Fire Service Emergency Planning & Civil Resilience	£490,649

The Community Safety figure, above, is slightly lower than shown in 2013-14. This budget includes a percentage of firefighter salary costs and a number of vacancies were held pending our Future Fire & Rescue plans (see right). This does not reflect any reduction in community safety work, or the importance we attach to this.

The Emergency Planning & Civil Resilience figure is higher than shown in 2013-14 due to a one-off Severe Weather Grant from central government that was invested during this period.

How we provide value for money

During the year a great deal of work was carried out to redesign West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service in a programme known as Future Fire & Rescue (FFR).

There are changing expectations and demands on fire and rescue services – for example, the number of emergency calls we receive has reduced thanks, in part, to the prevention work carried out by firefighters and community safety teams.

We want this reduction in risk to continue as we work even

more closely with partners and communities to provide coordinated services, and by targeting our resources towards the most vulnerable groups.

FFR will maximise the benefits available from new technologies but, more importantly, will introduce more flexible ways of working to better meet the needs of the county - now and in the future.

This is a major programme of change, made up of numerous inter-related projects, designed to help meet the challenges of reductions in Government grant funding.

This fundamental review is a different approach to previous budget challenges.

Fire Redesign One and Fire Redesign Two delivered service efficiencies and a £4m budget reduction in years 2011 and 2013 without any significant changes to how the service operated.

FFR is a more holistic approach to the long term future of the service, broadening our role to make a greater difference to the lives of local residents but in a cost efficient manner.

The first phase of the programme helped support budget reductions of approximately £820,000 by April 2014. The more extensive changes being implemented from April 2015 will deliver a further reduction in our operating budget of £1.6million.

Key elements Future Fire & Rescue

Moving an immediate response engine from a temporary base at Horsham to a permanent base at Littlehampton

– We have eight immediate response engines based at five fire stations. In 2013 one was moved from Horley to Horsham as an interim measure, pending a further review of operational needs and risk. This will relocate to Littlehampton, leaving both stations with two engines – one crewed 24-hours a day by immediate response crews and the second crewed by retained, on-call, firefighters.

Crewing changes at immediate response stations –

We are introducing a new way of crewing our immediate response stations, using a system called Group Crewing. This maintains our 24-hour immediate response capabilities, but with three fewer firefighters at each station.

Removing low activity second fire engines from three locations –

Our second appliances at our retained stations in Midhurst, Petworth and Storrington have seen low levels of operational demand in recent years. Crew numbers will not be reduced at these stations and retained firefighters will be able to support deployment to incidents using other off-road vehicles based at these locations.

Closing our retained unit at Crawley – Crawley fire station has two fire engines providing an immediate response around the clock, along with other specialist vehicles. A third engine, crewed by retained firefighters, has attended a comparatively low number of calls in recent years. We will continue to ensure an immediate response is always available in the town, even during busy times, by bringing in fire engines from adjacent stations, as we do now, as and when needed.

Changing crewing at Shoreham, Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath and East Grinstead – These changes maintain our immediate response capability and community safety work over an increased period of core hours, but with a reduction of ten firefighter posts across the four stations.

Increase capabilities to support communities

during flooding and severe weather – Instances of widespread flooding and severe weather have increased expectations on fire and rescue services. We are investing an additional £220,000 in specialist equipment and training to improve our ability to support communities before, during and after weather-related disruption.

Reductions in management and administrative support – We will continue to seek cost-efficiencies by reviewing and rationalising our structure.

Our year in summary

West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service became part of the new county council Communities and Public Protection Directorate during the year, increasing the service's focus on safer, stronger and more resilient communities.

The Future Fire and Rescue Programme (see previous page) was a key focus during this period, with a huge amount of preparation completed in readiness for new ways of working from the next financial year.

The on-going national pension dispute saw continued strike action by Fire Brigades Union members during the year. Maintaining our response and performance during 50 separate instances of industrial action required a great deal of planning and preparation work and impacted greatly on our day-to-day operations.

The long-term project to bring together the control rooms for the East and West Sussex fire services in a new combined operation at Haywards Heath also came to fruition.

April

Six new retained firefighters were welcomed in to the service at a Pass Out ceremony in Worthing. They joined colleagues at Storrington, East Grinstead, East Preston and Shoreham. Additional retained recruits also joined the service in July, December and March.



May

The service announced draft proposals for improving its service while working to a reduced budget, under the Future Fire and Rescue programme.

Another milestone was reached on May 21 when

the Sussex Control Centre (SCC) took its first emergency calls.

Meanwhile, in Chichester, two bedrooms caught fire when a row of houses in Chichester were hit by lightning. Thankfully nobody was in the worst affected home when the storm struck but WSFRS crews helped rescue some of the family's pets.

June

These are just some of the successful students to pass through our flagship FireBreak scheme last year. The intervention scheme offers young people a positive learning experience outside of the traditional classroom environment, with a focus on teamwork, discipline, communication and problem-solving. These students took part in Crawley in June but courses were held at other locations across the county, including Haywards Heath and Worthing.



July

July was a busy month across the service. More than 90 firefighters tackled a thatch fire at a pub in Oving, near Chichester; Worthing was hit by flash floods; and West Sussex crews provided support to East Sussex during the devastating fire on Eastbourne Pier.

In happier news, thousands enjoyed one of the biggest fire station open days in the country at Worthing, while Chief Fire Officer Sean Ruth and Deputy Chief Fire Officer Lee Neale raised thousands of pounds for the Firefighters Charity and Operation Florian by cycling and running to every station in the county in just 48 hours.



August

More than 2,000 square metres of grassland on dunes at West Wittering beach were affected by a fire started by a disposable barbecue. It took crews more than three hours to extinguish the blaze.



Crews from Crawley and Horsham worked hard to protect properties after a water main burst in Broadfield.



September

Firefighters from across the county were honoured for their long and meritorious service at a special medal ceremony at Arundel Castle. The medals are awarded to wholtime and retained firefighters who have completed two decades of exemplary service to their community. Three special Service Medals were also presented to individuals who had completed 40 years of outstanding service.



This dramatic image shows firefighters tackling a thatch fire in Petworth. Thankfully the building was a storage barn, rather than anyone's home, and nobody was hurt.

October

West Sussex County Council members debated the Future Fire and Rescue proposals, paving the way for changes to be implemented at the start of the next financial year.

Meanwhile, crews from Shoreham rescued three women who were trapped after part of a tree was blown down on Southwick Recreation Ground in strong winds.

November

We joined East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, Sussex Police, South East Coast Ambulance's HART and a local RNLI lifeboat for a multi-agency exercise at Newhaven.



Closer to home, the service passed on official thanks to staff and members of the public at the Chief Fire Officer's Commendation and Achievement Awards (see above).

December

Worthing Fire Station came up with a dramatic image to ram home the risks of drink or drug driving, with this mock-up of a vehicle crashing through the front of the station building. The image was widely used in local media.





Colleagues further to the west of the county made national headlines after actor Laurence Fox tweeted his thanks to 'Midhurst's finest' after they dealt with a chimney fire at his home.

January

Technical Rescue Unit (TRU) members rescued a couple from a car stuck in deep flood waters near Partridge Green.



February

Retained firefighter Michael Gaunt hit the headlines when he successfully administered CPR for around 25 minutes during a football match when an opposition player suffered a cardiac arrest on the pitch.



March

Approximately three acres of heathland near Heyshott were affected by this fire (see below). Firefighters used 4x4s, hose reels, backpacks and beaters to extinguish the blaze.

And a final note from the last day of the financial year – our fire control operators play a vital role in critical incidents, but sometimes they deal with some more unusual, and inappropriate, uses of the 999 system. In the early hours of March 31 they were called by a lady in Chichester – who wanted help with a huge spider in her house.





Making West Sussex safe

We want to make West Sussex a better place for everyone.

Over the years our safety and prevention work has helped reduce the numbers of serious incidents we deal with. Now we want to support our communities even further with new ways of working with the people we come in to contact with.

We target our resources at those shown to be most at risk. For example, we know, statistically, some people are more at risk of injury from fire than others, as injuries have a strong link to social deprivation, mental and physical health and low educational attainment.

In the last 12 months Safer Communities teams, Community Fire Safety Officers (CFSOs) and operational crews have carried out more than 4,500 High Priority Home Safety Visits to people defined as being most at risk.

This helps support the county council's ambition for residents to remain independent, safely, in their own homes for longer later in life.

As a trusted face, in a familiar uniform, our frontline staff can have more open access to some individuals. To maximise the benefit of this they have been given safeguarding training to help

them identify issues and refer people who need additional help or support to partner organisations or other relevant county council departments.

Last year operational crews and CFSOs raised concerns about more than 300 people – these included vulnerable residents who had been neglecting themselves; people suffering from dementia; residents risking their safety by hoarding; some who were becoming increasingly frail or needing mobility aids; people not receiving attendance allowances they were entitled to or, in extreme cases, individuals appearing to be at risk of harm or abuse.

We use a common sense approach to assess all of the risks an individual may be facing, so take into account additional areas, such as the risk of slips, trips and falls; social isolation; general well-being and the impact of hospital equipment in the home, for example safety considerations around using oxygen for medical reasons.

By working closely with other organisations, and the communities we serve, we aim to find new ways to keep people safe and target our prevention work at those who are most vulnerable.

In 2014/15 we:

- **Carried out 6,516 Home Safety Visits – this figure is more than 1,000 higher than in 2013/14**
- **4,500 of these visits were to high priority households**
- **During these we fitted 3,749 community fire links, or Careline alarms**
- **We installed more than 200 specialist alarms for the hard of hearing, such as vibrating pillow alarms**
- **We fitted 4,141 standard ten year smoke alarms.**

Reaching those at risk

Between 2001 and 2011 the population of over 65s and over 85s in the county grew by 13,750 and 3,437 respectively.

Not all people within those age ranges will be vulnerable but, in West Sussex, most people affected by fires are over 65 and live alone. Mobility, sensory difficulties, reluctance to seek advice and living conditions can all increase risk.

That's why we work with our partners to protect vulnerable older people from fire and to help them continue living safely in their own homes.

Making a difference

Our Community Fire Safety Advisors are trained to spot and reduce some of the most common fire risks, like carelessly discarded cigarettes, overloaded electrical sockets and unsafe cooking or heating practices.

They can install specialist fire protection monitors for those who would have difficulty responding to a normal smoke alarm, like vibrating pillow pads for the hard of hearing, or radio-linked alarms that connect to an operator at a community alarm monitoring service.

We routinely offer free electric blanket safety checks, and advice on cooking safely, but have also increased our engagement with partners and other agencies that regularly have contact with vulnerable residents.

You can request a Home Safety Visit by calling free on 0800 328 6487 or via www.westsussex.gov.uk/fire. We particularly want to hear from, or about, people who are:

- **Over 65 and living alone**
- **Using a community alarm or monitoring service, like Careline**
- **Having difficulty responding to a standard smoke alarm**
- **Disabled, immobile or with an impairment**

Volunteers

- We have volunteers in Bognor, Littlehampton, Crawley, Worthing Chichester and Midhurst – but hope to increase the geographical spread of these.
- They help us with some of the lower risk home safety visits, or where we are revisiting properties we have been to before.
- They also support community events, open days, exercises and other events, such as electric blanket safety checking.
- Their vital support helps us provide a better service for the communities we serve.

If you'd like to find out more about our volunteer team please contact emma.francis@westsussex.gov.uk



Safe learning

For the very youngest members of the community our schools education officer, and local fire crews, deliver education programmes from primary school age upwards.

We have a valuable role to play in teaching children about fire prevention and road safety, but, working with partners, we can also help to tackle wider social issues, diverting young people from anti-social behaviour and helping them to make a positive contribution to their communities.

We also want to use firefighters as positive role models for young people.

We are already leading the way in the classroom, having developed specialist learning materials with an education adviser, to ensure children can actively join in the lessons we run and retain the information we share with them.

At the same time, we are seeing a growing number of referrals to our Firewise programme, which can help young people understand the

consequences of experimenting with fires. This grew from 33 visits between April 2013 and March 2014 – to as many as ten a month last year.

Our programmes include fire cadets, Coaching for a Safer Community, Prince's Trust schemes and NEET (not in employment, education or training) groups. We also run our flagship FireBreak course, in partnership with our colleagues from WSCC Youth Services.

In 2014/15 we:

- Visited 131 schools, giving us contact with 6,710 pupils
- Reached 2,938 pupils through Junior Citizen events
- Saw 59 pupils through Prince's Trust schemes.
- Worked with 145 students, including students with special needs, on 14 FireBreak courses
- Carried out 85 Firewise visits

Building Stronger Communities

We want to help build strong and vibrant communities across West Sussex, where people are supported and encouraged to help themselves and each other.

We also want to develop more resilient communities, by helping people prepare for, and recover from, significant events.

Supporting safer communities for residents and businesses will help the county thrive and develop.

To help achieve stronger communities we work in partnership with a wide range of agencies and organisations. These include other emergency responders, local authorities, wider county council colleagues, care and support agencies and the voluntary sector.

Some of our key partnerships include:

- **Working with East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service on the new combined fire control project, Sussex Control Centre, based at Haywards Heath.**
- **Receiving high risk Home Safety Visit referrals from Telecare providers.**
- **Preparing for emergencies as part of the Sussex Resilience Forum.**
- **Co-ordinated road safety campaigns, through the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership.**
- **Reaching vulnerable people through charities like Age UK, the Independent Living Association and Action for Deafness.**
- **Supporting those displaced from their homes through partnership with the Red Cross Fire Emergency Support Service.**

Community Resilience

West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service will always be there for people in times of emergency. However, we are working with our partners to support our communities in shaping their own safety and emergency preparations.

Even localised emergencies, like heavy snowfall or flooding, can have a very serious impact on local areas, and on the emergency services who respond to them.

Encouraging people to prepare for such incidents can help the whole community. But community resilience is more than just preparing for major incidents. It is also about helping people to take control of their own safety on a daily basis. Projects like the Community Volunteer programme and HeartStart training empower people to make a positive difference to their own lives and to those around them.



Road Safety

A huge amount of work has been carried out to improve the safety of vehicles and roads but, sadly, road traffic collisions (RTCs) still happen.

In West Sussex, people are four times more likely to die in a traffic collision than a fire.

Statistically, the groups most at risk of being killed or seriously injured are:

- **Young drivers, up to the age of 24**
- **Older drivers, over the age of 65**
- **Motorcycle riders**

As a fire and rescue service we deal with the consequences of RTCs on a daily basis so we are working closely with our regional and national

road safety partners in a bid to drive down the number, and consequences, of collisions.

One of the key local road safety collaborations is the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership (SSRP), which includes Sussex Police, East and West Sussex Fire & Rescue Services, the Highways Agency, WSCC and Brighton and Hove City Council.

Donate your old car and help save a life.

Have you got an old car you want to scrap? If so, you could donate your vehicle to help our crews with their life-saving cutting and extrication skills.

Please call 01243 642880 during office hours.



Our regular road safety activities include:

Safe Drive Stay Alive

A hard-hitting stage show seen by 8,000 17 to 25-year-olds each year. It highlights dangers like speed/inexperience, mobile phone distraction and the impact of drink and drugs.

Hard Hit

This is a classroom presentation by firefighters to road user groups deemed to be at further risk of being involved in a RTC, or who have already received a conviction.

Choices

This deals with the costs of driving - covering vehicle purchase, maintenance, insurance and the law. It is delivered to students from 16 upwards.

Fire Bike

Our fire bike promotes road safety at events across the county. It raises awareness of the Sussex Police Bike Safe courses for riders to have their skill levels assessed and learn new safety techniques.

Business Fire Safety

We play a critical role in supporting the West Sussex economy and work with businesses across the county to help them keep their customers, staff and our crews as safe as possible.

We carry out this role in three ways, by:

- **Advice**
- **Audit**
- **Enforcement**

Advice

Business owners, and those responsible for business premises, have a legal responsibility for risk-assessing and making their places of work safe. We work with businesses to increase their understanding of fire safety regulations and to help them comply with their legal responsibilities. We produce targeted fire safety literature, host education events and offer face-to-face guidance.

Audit

We have developed a risk-based approach to fire safety audits to ensure we target our resources effectively and prioritise inspections. Audits are a thorough examination of premises



to establish how well they are managing fire safety and can include checking adequate fire safety and warning systems are in place.

Enforce

We want to work in partnership with businesses to help them achieve a satisfactory level of fire safety. However, where significant breaches of fire safety legislation occur, we issue formal enforcement notices and will seek to prosecute where there is wilful disregard for public safety.

Expert Fire Safety Training

WSFRS offers high quality fire safety training to local, national and international organisations. For further information, visit the Business Safety Advice section of our website at www.westsussex.gov.uk/fire.

A year in business

794 satisfactory full fire safety audits
122 informal notifications
5 enforcement notices

There were no prosecutions during this period. We will always work hard with businesses to ensure issues can be rectified before resorting to prosecution, where possible. However, a great deal of work has been devoted to pursuing the most serious cases we have encountered.





- **How you can become involved**

We would welcome your comments or feedback about this report and how we're letting you know about our priorities and performance. Thank you for your time.

- **Access to information**

If you would like this information in an alternative format or language please contact us using the following information.

Contacting us



Phone

01243 777100



Email

wsfrs@westsussex.gov.uk



Website

www.westsussex.gov.uk/

Follow us on Twitter @WestSussexFire or find us on Facebook www.facebook.com/wsfrs