

<b>Report title:</b> Essex County Fire and Rescue Service End of Year Performance Report 2020 – 2021	
<b>Report to:</b> Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel	
<b>Report author:</b> Roger Hirst (Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority)	
<b>Date:</b> 21 October 2021	<b>For:</b> Noting and comment
<b>Enquiries to:</b> Pippa Brent-Isherwood (Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer) 01245 291613 <a href="mailto:pippa.brent-isherwood@essex.police.uk">pippa.brent-isherwood@essex.police.uk</a>	
<b>County Divisions affected:</b> All Essex	

### 1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service's progress in delivering the priorities and performance targets set out in the Fire and Rescue Plan during 2020/21.

### 2. Recommendations

That members of the Panel note and comment / seek clarity as appropriate on the content of the report and attached appendix.

### 3. Context / Summary

The full End of Year Performance Report for 2020 – 2021 is attached at Appendix 1. In terms of key points to note:

- As has been reported to the Panel previously, the operations of the service were significantly impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic during 2020/21. Prevention activities were particularly affected, with the service able to undertake 44% fewer visits to people's homes compared with the previous year. Community events were also cancelled, with the human resources that would usually deliver these diverted to supporting logistics at local hospitals, assisting vulnerable people who were shielding, and conducting After Incident Responses across the county. As a result, Safe and Well Officers made 81% fewer referrals to other agencies than during 2019/20. Those who were referred, however, accessed support relating to a diverse range of issues including smoking cessation, mental health, dementia, fuel payments and mobility. The service also made significantly fewer safeguarding referrals in 2020/21 than during the previous year (representing a 52% reduction for children and a 21% reduction for adults).
- Following the closure of schools in response to the pandemic, the

Education Team in Essex was the first in the country to move its education programme online, with the creation of the Education Hub and the delivery of virtual lessons via Zoom. During the year, content on the Hub received 6,251 views. Despite there being an 89% overall reduction in the number of children and young people reached during the year, this digital approach permitted the team to engage with much larger audiences in a single session, so will form part of a blended approach to delivery going forward.

- The total number of incidents attended by the service continued to fall, declining by 6% compared with the previous year. Within this, the number of false alarms rose very slightly (by just under 1%) but did not reach the levels seen in 2017/18 and 2018/19.
- Mirroring the national trend, the steady decline in the rate of accidental dwelling fires (ADFs) continued, falling from 4.2 to 4.0 per 10,000 population compared with the previous year. The service is currently working with the Essex Centre for Data Analytics (ECDA) to identify groups at risk of ADFs and to inform future prevention activity to improve this figure further. The rate of deliberate fires also fell (after rising during 2019/20), with the total number of deliberate fires reducing by almost a third. The total number of fires in non-residential properties likewise continued its downward trajectory, falling by 11% compared with 2019/20. Against the national trend, however, the number of fire-related fatalities and casualties rose slightly, by three fatalities and one casualty.
- Across the year, pumping appliance availability remained steady for wholtime and day crewed appliances and improved from 74% to 79% for on-call, largely due to more on-call firefighters being available whilst on furlough. However, all types of availability finished the year below the target level. Challenges around availability typically arise during the daytime and in areas where recruitment is hampered by factors such as town sizes, more transient populations and population density compared with target turn-out times. Some availability issues have also arisen due to on-call firefighters converting to wholtime. Where day crewed stations are continuing to show low availability, recruitment is being supported by On Call Liaison Officers, which is now beginning to yield positive results in areas that have historically proven challenging to cover (e.g. Canvey).
- Linked to availability, the average response time to a potentially life-threatening incident improved from 10 minutes 14 seconds to 10 minutes 10 seconds but was outside the target time of 10 minutes. Additional work is being undertaken on call handling to improve performance further. Implementation of the new Response Strategy, which has been approved in 2021/22, will assist further in enabling the service to resolve emergency situations efficiently and effectively.
- Despite the pandemic, the Protection team experienced a slight (2%) increase in its activity compared with the previous year. The service's new Risk Based Inspection Programme was launched and implemented during 2020/21, supported by the training of 10 new Inspecting Officers and the recruitment of a further 7.6. Enforcement activity also increased.
- During periods of lockdown, traffic volumes reduced but recorded speeds increased. Over the course of the year, the number of RTCs attended by the fire and rescue service fell by over a quarter (26%), and the total number of people killed and seriously injured (KSI) on Essex roads fell by

22% compared with the previous year. The number of fatalities remained stable (at 43) whilst the number of serious casualties fell by 23%. The Coronavirus pandemic had a significant impact of the delivery of all RTC activity during 2020/21 however, when conditions permitted, the service was able to attend 29 RTC reductions events and engaged with 230 riders of powered two-wheelers; a group of road users which featured slightly more frequently in KSI collisions in 2020/21 compared with previous years.

- As at 31 March 2021, there was a higher proportion of women in wholetime, on-call, Control and support roles compared with 12 months prior. The proportion of staff from an ethnic minority improved overall, and specifically within wholetime and support roles, but fell amongst on-call and Control roles. The proportion of staff identifying as LGBTQ+ rose overall, and specifically in wholetime and on-call roles, but fell in Control and support roles. The proportion of staff reporting that they have a disability either remained stable or increased across all employment categories.
- The service dealt with 48% fewer attendance management cases and 58% fewer performance management cases in 2020/21 compared with the previous year but saw marginal increases (of one and two respectively) in the number of disciplinary and grievance cases dealt with. Most types of cases were dealt with more expeditiously than in 2019/20, except for disciplinary cases which took, on average, more than twice as long to resolve in 2020/21.
- Revisions to complaint handling processes facilitated a significant improvement in the proportion of complaints closed within the target time, from 81% to 94%. There was also a 30% reduction in the number of data breaches reported.

#### **4. Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Essex County Fire and Rescue Service End of Year Performance Report 2020 - 2021