

Report title: ESSEX COUNTY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2021/22	
Report to: Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel	
Report author: Police Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority, Roger Hirst	
Date: 21 July 2022	For: Noting and comment
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County Divisions affected: 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 (ECFRS's) progress in delivering the priorities set out in the Fire and Rescue Plan 2019 – 2024 and the Integrated Risk Management Plan 2020-2024 during the final quarter of 2021/22.

The more detailed report attached at Appendix 1, produced by the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service and scrutinised at the monthly Performance and Resources Board chaired by the Authority, provides highlight and exception reporting against service priorities.

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

To put into context the circumstances in which these levels of performance were achieved:

- ECFRS attended 3,708 incidents in Quarter 4 of 2021/22; the highest total number of incidents attended in the final quarter over the last four years. This was predominantly due to a 41% increase in special services and a 19% increase in fires compared with the same time the previous year. Calls to road traffic collisions were higher during Quarter 4 than in any of the previous three years and Storm Eunice, which occurred in February 2022, placed particularly significant demands on the service.

- 2021/22 saw a 10% increase in the number of fires in non-residential properties (from 314 to 346) compared with 2020/21, with Quarter 4 experiencing a 75% increase (from 63 to 110).
- The Safeguarding Team received 331 referrals during the quarter, which is an increase on the same period in 2019/20 and more than double the volume received in Quarter 4 of 2020/21.
- Against this backdrop of increased demand, the Omicron Covid variant significantly impacted staffing levels. The overall percentage of working time lost to sickness in Quarter 4 was 8.1% against a target of 5%, with more than a third of this being Covid-related. The Control Room experienced the highest rate of time lost (at 10.1%), whilst sickness absence amongst support services was below the accepted target (at 3.5%). Staff from many functions across the service volunteered to support the Control Room whilst it was in business continuity arrangements, as well as volunteering to support delivery of the vaccination programme.

Highlights with regard to performance during Quarter 4 include:

- The rate of deliberate fires fell slightly for the whole of 2021/22 compared with 2020/21 (from 4.5 to 4.2 per 10,000 population), with the total number falling by 6% (from 823 to 772).
- The rate of Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs) per 10,000 population remained stable in 2021/22 compared with 2020/21, with Quarter 4 seeing a slight reduction in volume, from 734 to 717. The proportion of ADFs in which a smoke alarm was present and worked was higher throughout the quarter than during the same period the previous year.
- All actions arising for the service out of the Grenfell Inquiry are progressing on target.
- Station staff completed 306 Safe and Well Visits in Quarter 4 of 2021/22 compared with just 42 in Quarter 4 of 2020/21. The average evaluation score from these visits is 9.56 out of 10, with all recipients stating that they would recommend a visit to their friends and family.
- Opportunities to collaborate with Essex Police continue to be expanded and built upon, with the Operational Community Risk Team and operational crews now supporting Operation Grip to reduce anti-social behaviour by carrying out community engagement activity in identified "hotspots".
- The Operational Community Risk team also met with community leaders within the Charedi Jewish community on Canvey Island to promote joint working and enhance community safety. A volunteer has been identified to work alongside ECFRS and the Jewish community to promote fire safety messages and joint training opportunities have been identified with Hatzola, a Jewish community emergency response ambulance service.

- As part of its commitment to increase the diversity of its workforce, the service successfully piloted a change to its assessment centres to support applicants with neuro-divergent needs. This change will now be rolled out across future recruitment activity.
- Maintaining our commitment to transparency, the proportion of Freedom of Information (FOI), Subject Access and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests responded to in a timely manner remained well above target. No complaints were received during the quarter regarding the quality of responses to statutory requests for information, and there were no complaints relating to data protection.

In terms of areas for continued focus:

- Linked to the rise in demands on the service, the average response time to potentially life-threatening incidents was outside of target throughout the quarter. The percentage of incidents attended within 15 minutes was also below target. The Area Manager for Response has been tasked with investigating all calls to potentially life-threatening incidents that take significantly longer than target to respond to, in order to target remedial actions in areas most likely to improve performance. Options to increase resilience in the Control Room are also being scoped out.
- Total pumping appliance availability fell compared with the same period the previous year and was also below target throughout the quarter. Wholetime and day crew pumping appliance availability remained at or just below the target of 98%, however on-call availability was significantly below target, ranging between 67% and 74% against a target of 90%.
- Linked to the increased number of road traffic collisions during the period, there were more people killed or seriously injured on Essex roads in Quarter 4 of 2021/22 than in the same period the previous year. Provisional figures show a 233% increase in fatalities (from three to 10) and a 26% increase in serious casualties (from 138 to 174). During the quarter, the Road Traffic Collision Reduction Team attended 10 community events across the county and work began on a post-collision training course for motorcyclists. Scoping work also began on a powered two-wheeler intervention for young riders in the gig economy (deliveries).
- The service continued to struggle to deliver its Risk Based Inspection Programme during the quarter, completing 228 audits of priority premises against a target of 609 (37%). Recruitment to vacancies is underway to bring the team up to the establishment required to deliver the programme. The Protection Team is also in the process of training operational crews to carry out fire safety audits as part of the programme, and additional training is being provided to existing Fire Protection staff to increase the volume of audits completed against the target. In addition, a dedicated workshop was held on 17 June to explore further the reasons for these performance levels and agree an action plan to address these.

4. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Essex County Fire & Rescue Service Quarter Four Performance Report
2021 - 2022