

Report title: Essex County Fire and Rescue Service Performance Report – Quarter 2 2020/21	
Report to: Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel	
Report author: The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex	
Date: 4 February 2021	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 progress in delivering the priorities set out in the Fire and Rescue Plan 2019 – 2024 and the Integrated Risk Management Plan 2020 - 2024, based on data and other information to September 2020.

The attached quarterly report, produced by the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service and scrutinised at the monthly Performance and Resources Board chaired by the Commissioner, provides highlight reporting against service priorities. The service continues to develop the report and, this quarter, has added data relating to new performance indicators being monitored by the responsible Minister.

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

During the quarter, significant service resources continued to be invested in responding to the impacts of the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, both within the service and within the wider multi-agency system. Despite the pressures placed on the service during the quarter, all planning, building regulations and licensing cases processed in Quarter 2 were completed within the statutory time limit. In addition, 89% of statutory information requests and complaints were closed on time, against a target of 90%. The service's processes for handling complaints, compliments and Subject Access Requests are currently being reviewed and updated to improve performance further.

The pandemic continued to affect activities reliant on face-to-face contact, though there was some improvement in this. There was an increase in Home Safety activity during Quarter 2 compared with Quarter 1, particularly visits to our most vulnerable residents (those living alone, aged over 65 and / or with disabilities),

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however this still represented a reduction compared to Quarter 2 of 2019/20. As the country emerges from lockdown, we expect to see an increase in Safe and Well visits to individuals with a disability due to the start of a project to explore the durability of sensory alarms fitted over the last three years.

In terms of the service's work with and for partners, virtual education sessions have been offered to schools as an alternative to face to face provision, allowing sessions on home safety, cyber safety and other topics to continue within several districts. The online hub hosted by the Education Team has permitted large audiences (of up to 180 in a single class) to be educated simultaneously despite the ongoing restrictions on activity and attendance.

During Quarter 2, highlights with regard to performance include:

- ECFRS attended 4,050 incidents in Quarter 2. This is the lowest volume attended in the second quarter over the last four years (being 11.4% fewer than in 2019/20, 15.1% fewer than in 2018/19 and 1% fewer than in 2017/18). There were reductions in all incident types during the quarter.
- There were 6% fewer fires in Quarter 2 of 2020/21 compared with Quarter 2 of 2019/20. The total number of fires in non-domestic properties was 15 less than the total for the same quarter in 2019/20, and 27 fewer for the rolling 12-month period to the end of September 2020 than for the previous 12-month period. The majority of those that did occur in Quarter 2 were in private garden sheds, which are not regulated premises under the Fire Safety Order. The rate and number of deliberate fires (both primary and secondary) were both lower in Quarter 2 of this year than in the same period the previous year.
- The mean response time to potentially life-threatening incidents showed an improved position in Quarter 2 of 2020/21, at 9 minutes 58 seconds (slightly better than the target of 10 minutes), compared with 10 minutes 21 seconds during Quarter 2 of the last financial year.
- Provisional Safer Essex Roads Partnership (SERP) data indicates a 14.9% reduction in the number of road traffic collisions in Quarter 2 of 2020/21 compared with Quarter 2 of 2019/20, and a 10.1% reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured across the same two time periods. In line with this, there was a 17.7% reduction in the number of RTCs attended by ECFRS in 2020/21 compared with the same period the previous year. This was achieved despite traffic flows returning to near normal levels following the first national lockdown period.
- Members of the Panel will be aware that false alarms have previously exerted pressure on the service. It is therefore pleasing to report that there was a 9.2% reduction in false alarms during Quarter 2 of 2020/21 compared with the same period the previous year, and a 4.4% reduction for the 12-month rolling period to the end of September 2020 compared with the previous 12 months. There was also a 13.5% reduction in unwanted fire signals (false alarms due to apparatus automatically detecting fires in residential and non-residential properties) in Quarter 2 of

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this year compared with the same period the previous year, along with an 11% reduction in the 12-month rolling total to the end of September 2020 compared with the prior 12 months. Hospitals remain the most common sites of unwanted fire signals.

In terms of areas requiring the continued focus of the service:

- Total pumping appliance availability (for both whole time / day crews and the on-call duty system) improved in Quarter 2 of 2020/21 compared with the same period last year. This was a significant achievement in the current operating environment but remained below the target of 94%. Whole time / day crew availability tracked slightly below the target of 98%, at between 95.3% and 97.4%. On-call availability was further from the 90% target, tracking at 73.6% to 79.2% throughout the quarter, partly due to on-call firefighters transferring to whole time. The service historically sees a reduction in on-call availability during Quarter 2 each year due to the peak summer leave period, however restrictions in place due to the pandemic have improved the overall picture slightly this year, with some on-call stations (most notably Newport and Old Harlow) seeing significant improvements in availability during this period. Following notable improvements in availability seen at South Woodham Ferrers following the introduction of a dedicated Station Manager in 2020, a dedicated Station Manager is now similarly in post at Waltham Abbey to increase its current availability and support its future transition to an on-call station. A new Watch Manager has also been recruited to drive such improvements at Canvey. A new Response Strategy is due to be developed in Quarter 2 of 2021/22 which will be informed by availability data and seek to enhance this.
- There were 748 audits carried out by the Protection Team in Quarter 2 of 2020/21, the majority (721) of which were desktop audits. Of the 27 face-to-face audits conducted, 15 (56%) were unsatisfactory, evidencing the continued need for work to help building owners and occupiers to understand and implement their responsibilities. Where necessary, enforcement work continues to support this, with 15 notifications of deficiencies and one enforcement notice served during the quarter. The service is continuing to recruit and train new inspecting officers, which will increase its capacity to carry out audits and identify issues that need addressing. The service is also engaging with the Essex Chamber of Commerce to establish better links with the business community in order to support this work.

4. Appendices

ECFRS Quarterly Performance Report - Quarter Two 2020/21