

**Annual Report and
Statement of Assurance
2019/20**



Draft

Welcome to the Fire and Rescue Statement and the Annual Report for Essex County Fire and Rescue Service.

The report covers the financial year 2019/20, and includes highlights of the year, how we spent your money, performance against our targets and how we are working to improve our service to you.

It incorporates the Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority's Statement of Assurance. Under the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authorities must provide annual assurance on financial, governance and operational matters.

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Fire and Rescue Statement

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England sets out a requirement for the fire and rescue authorities to publish a statement of assurance.

It says the statement should:

“... outline the way in which the authority and its fire and rescue service has had regard – in the period covered by the document – to this National Framework, the Integrated Risk Management Plan and to any strategic plan (e.g. the Fire and Rescue Plan) prepared by the authority for that period.

The authority must also provide assurance to their community and to government on financial, governance and operational matters. For Police Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authorities (PCC FRA), this statement is subject to scrutiny by the Police, Fire and Crime Panel. The name of this statement differs across governance models. In the case of PCC FRAs it is called the ‘Fire and Rescue Statement’.”

2019/20 Fire and Rescue Statement of Assurance

Essex Police Fire Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority (EPFCCFRA) is satisfied that its business during the financial year 2019/20 was conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money was properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

The Authority is further satisfied that the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England have been met. Evidence to support this judgement can be found within this report, specifically:

Governance matters - page 5
Integrated Risk Management Plan - page 36
Financial Matters - page 44

Signed:

Roger Hirst
Police Fire and Crime Commissioner

Governance

Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority

The Service is governed by Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority (EPFCCFRA).

The role of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner is to be the voice of the people, hold Essex Police to account and provide an efficient and effective fire and rescue service.

Responsibilities regarding Essex County Fire and Rescue Service

The PFCC must:

- Provide a local connection between the fire and rescue service and local communities
- Set a budget and determine the council tax requirement
- Maintain an efficient and effective fire and rescue service for the county
- Approve an Integrated Risk Management Plan
- Develop a Fire and Rescue Plan and Fire and Rescue Statement
- Scrutinise, support and challenge performance against the Plan
- Appoint a Chief Fire Officer to lead and manage the service

The PFCC is elected by the public to hold the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Constable to account, effectively making the fire and rescue service and police force answerable to the communities they serve. The PFCC ensures that community needs are met as effectively as possible, and local relationships improve through building confidence and trust. They work in partnership across a range of agencies at local and national level to ensure there is a unified approach to preventing and reducing crime.

Our Police Fire and Crime Commissioner is Roger Hirst.

Roger took on governance of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service in 2017 following approval from the Home Secretary and wide spread support from the public and partners across Essex. As the first Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner in the Country Roger has helped to establish the role and developed the first Fire and Rescue Plan. The Plan set out an ambitious programme of change and development for the Service, increasing efforts to keep vulnerable people safe, prevent fire, work collaboratively with partners and ensure an efficient and effective fire and rescue service.

The Police Fire Crime Commissioner election were due to take place in May 2020. Due to the COVID9 public health crisis the elections have been postponed for a year and the government passed emergency legislation to ensure existing Police Fire and Crime Commissioners continue in post until the elections can be rearranged.

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's Report

Roger Hirst

Since becoming the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex in 2017 it has been a pleasure to see how the Service has grown and developed, improving the value it delivers for the people of Essex and way it manages risk across our county.

This report is important not only because it records the Service's performance during the 2019-2020 year but because it is the first report to do this against the priorities set out in the Fire and Rescue Plan 2019-2024. The Plan was developed with considerable public and partner engagement and has led this year to the development and publication of a new Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) that will help the Service deliver against its strategic priorities.

The Fire and Rescue Plan marks an important shift in the priorities for the Service with increased focus on working together with partners to reduce harm in Essex. Wherever possible we need to reduce the risk to the public and prevent incidents happening in the first place and this report shows clear, early signs of this shift taking effect.

It is encouraging to see the work undertaken by the Service around prevention. From the 191,000 children reached by the joint education team, the great work being done with young

drivers in partnership with Safer Essex Roads Partnership and the continued success of Safe and Well visits the Service is making a real difference. This is good work and I know there is more that we all want to achieve so it is exciting to see these early signs of progress.

During the year the Service also underwent its first inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services. This was a positive inspection which showed that real progress is being made and that where improvement needs to be made the Service is aware of this and have plans in place.

One area that was picked up in the Inspection, as it has been picked up by the Inspectorate in fire and rescue services across the country, was the fire safety inspection programme which sits as part of our protection work. Since the visit we have developed and approved a new protection strategy, implemented a new risk-based inspection regime, increased the size of the team and improved the IT available.

This year the Service has also continued to develop the work it does with other services, increasing the number of fire stations available for use as police drop in centres to eleven and further developing its joint procurement work.

The culture of collaboration and partnership working really shone through towards the end of this financial year as the Service took a leadership role in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The contribution the Service made came from all levels of the organisation from the Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer and their senior leadership team to the many firefighters and staff who volunteered to drive ambulances, deliver food and medicine to the vulnerable or help our colleagues in the NHS set up new intensive care beds.

This was done at a time when the Service was also under its own operational pressure. This ability to continue to deliver an excellent Service, make a significant contribution to our county-wide response efforts and provide expert planning and leadership is what makes our Service so special.

I would like to thank all of those involved not just in the response to COVID-19 but in keeping our communities safe throughout the year. This year has been a good year where real progress has been achieved and we have laid a solid foundation for continued progress in the future.

Roger Hirst
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

Review of the Year

Chief Fire Officer/ Chief Executive

Jo Turton

I am delighted to share with you Essex County Fire and Rescue Service's annual report and statement of assurance. This report has been developed to help our public understand our Service, and how we manage our budgets and spend our money.

As an organisation, we have been through some major changes in the last few years, but one thing that has remained constant is the passion and professionalism that our staff and volunteers display.

Our vision is that safe and secure communities are the bedrock on which we build well-being and prosperity for all. To do this, our Service needs to be efficient and effective across all the services we provide, preventing incidents wherever possible and making sure we're embedded in our communities across Essex.

But none of this can be achieved if we don't have the right financial support, or manage our budgets in the correct way. Our statement of accounts outlines some of the key financial issues in areas such as revenue and capital spending, ensuring that we are investing in the key areas that help drive change, reduce risk and ensure that we can continue to provide a first-class emergency response service.

We're there when you need us

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS) attended 15,033 incidents from April 2019 to March 2020; that's down from 15,513 the previous year, with the total number of incidents attended by the Service decreasing consistently over the last four years.

Although over the last decade the number of fires has significantly reduced across Essex, we need to continue to understand the ever-changing risk picture. As the risks, demands and needs of our diverse communities change, our Service needs to develop and evolve, responding to these new challenges by being innovative and adaptable in keeping the people of Essex – including our own staff – safe from harm.

Our performance data highlights August 2019 as our busiest month, as the Service attended 1,612 incidents, with both July and September 2019 also seeing us attend a high number of incidents. This is a typical trend for us, along with other fire and rescue services, where the summer period sees the most incidents. This is due to outdoor barbecues, garden bonfires, and also grass field fires – or wild fires – as a result of the hot and dry summer. Wildfires typically require a lot of fire engines to attend the incident, which has an impact on the cost and resources needed from our Service.

There were 4,580 fires attended by ECFRS in 2019/2020, that's the lowest number attended per year since 2016/2017. Of course, our work focuses on more than just responding to fires; we want to prevent them from happening in the first place.

We are passionate and committed to ensuring the people of Essex get the best possible fire and rescue service – it's what our public expect and deserve. This means we need a service that continues to drive down the number of incidents, has effective and efficient prevention, protection and response activities in place, works well within communities and with its partners and is transparent, open and accessible, as well as being a great place to work.

Keeping our residents safe and well

When I meet people and speak about our organisation, I find that sometimes they can be surprised that our role as a fire and rescue service is more than putting out fires. We are a Service that is also focused on preventing fires and harm from happening in the first place; and that takes continuous improvement and work behind the scenes.

Our staff and volunteers undertake Home Safety and Safe and Well visits across Essex, reaching and engaging with those most vulnerable to fire in our communities.

The vast majority of home safety visits in 2019/2020 were with people aged 65 and over. We also conducted over 3,000 visits to people that live alone or have a disability. Reaching these communities is an incredibly important part of the work and service that we deliver, as we know that these people are at the highest risk of dying in a fire.

We know that safe children become safe adults, and that's why our community safety work focuses on reaching and engaging

with children across the county. In 2019/2020, our education team engaged with 191,401 children across Essex. Additionally, our bespoke Firebreak courses – targeted intervention programmes for people aged 10-12, 13-17 and 18 onwards - aims to promote a culture of safety by providing a range of vital and transferable life skills. In 2019/202, 87% of the 269 participants completed the courses.

HMICFRS

In 2019 we were inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue (HMICFRS) – a first for all fire and rescue services across the country. We went into it with an open and positive mind-set, welcoming the process and seeing it as a helpful addition to our existing improvement and transformation programme.

For us, there were no surprises in the Inspectorate's findings; the feedback echoes what we told the inspectorate, and reassures us that we are self-aware and that our focus is in the right areas.

Although HMICFRS stated they were satisfied with some aspects of the performance of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, the inspectorate graded the Service overall as "requires improvement".

The Inspectorate recognised the Service is good at responding to fires and emergencies and responding to national risks; a reflection of our hard work. They noted that we were good at:

- Responding to fires and other emergencies
- Responding to national risks
- Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future
- Managing performance and developing leaders

The report also highlighted where we still have more to do, in particular around protection, especially technical fire safety, prevention and above all getting the culture of the Service to where it needs to be, including better recruitment and retention of our on-call firefighters. These are areas where the Service is already taking actions to address.

We will continue to invest in these areas that require improvement, and these areas are already recognised as priorities within our Fire and Rescue Plan.

Our people make our Service

From a record number of nominations submitted for our staff People Awards, to celebrations of 50 years and 45 years in service – our people are our greatest asset, and they’ve continued to shine in this last year.

Over the last year we have welcomed new staff across our Service, including new wholetime firefighter squads, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Corporate Services Director and Chief Financial Officer (Section 151). We know that new staff bring

with them different experiences and a fresh outlook, and it’s fantastic that we continue to attract high calibre individuals. We’ve also introduced some new roles to support our Service priorities, including our Assistant Chief Executive of People, Culture and Values, as well as four On-Call Liaison Officers.

Our objective is to have a safe and diverse workforce who we enable to perform well in a supportive culture underpinned by excellent training. We do that so we have a modern, forward looking, innovative and collaborative culture that can anticipate and deliver against the changing needs of our communities so that our communities get the best possible service.

In 2019 we ran a listening exercise for all of our people, this was called ‘Everyone Matters’. What we heard from Everyone Matters informs how we lead our Service - developing our culture one conversation at a time. This feedback was invaluable in influencing the content of our People Strategy 2020-2024.

Medium Term Financial Plan

Our medium term financial plan (MTFP) ensures that we work as a value for money organisation, and that we demonstrate our efficiency and effectiveness. Our approach to budgeting is sustainable and ensures that we meet the needs of our communities across Essex.

Our 2020-24 MTFP was published in the financial year of 2019/20, and seeks to deliver against our financial challenges

and save £4.3m over this term, while ensuring we have sufficient financial resources that can be invested into areas we have identified as our priorities.

You can read more, and read our MTFP here: https://www.essex-fire.gov.uk/documents/Medium_Term_Financial_Plan_2020-24

COVID 19

And finally, as I write this, we're in a global pandemic, that has affected each and every one of us in some way. I am incredibly proud of our response to this as a Service. We have been united in kind, and have adapted, responded and volunteered, helping to keep our residents safe and informed.

Throughout the pandemic, we have continued to provide a full emergency fire and rescue service response for our public and fulfil our duties under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. In addition to delivering our responsibilities to respond to risk within our communities through our prevention and legislative fire safety functions, we made sure our staff were provided with the PPE and equipment to enable them to undertake their duties safely, We also made sure our duty to secure water supplies for the use of firefighting was maintained.

Our priorities have been to help stop the spread of this virus with the support of our public sector and emergency service partners, protect our public, our colleagues and safeguard our resilience.

Though the situation involving coronavirus (COVID-19) is unprecedented, ECFRS has a robust operational and business continuity plan which we regularly update and test, so that in events such as this, we are prepared and confident in meeting these challenges. Because of this we have maintained a good level of service, despite the challenges that Covid-19 has and continues to present.

As always, ECFRS is working hard to maintain communication and engagement with the public. While it has been necessary to postpone events such as car washes and station visits, we have continued to deliver safety messages and updates through our website, social media channels and via local media.

We changed the way we carried out our home fire safety and safe and well visits, prioritising them for people who are particularly vulnerable to the risk of fire. During that time we continued to provide home safety advice over the phone, deliver smoke alarms and fitting instructions where needed and ensured more staff than ever were available to reassure, educate and advise anyone who needs this information. In terms of business safety, we have a legal duty to enforce the regulatory reform fire safety order, and have done this the best we can in this situation.

As this situation developed, and more people were staying at home, we saw an increase in garden and outdoor fires. In fact, in March 2020 outdoor fires doubled in Essex, and house fires were also higher than the same time the previous year. We responded to this and increased our safety messaging around

these types of incidents, and we were keen to embrace new ways of engaging with our public. Our staff recorded selfie-style home fire safety videos that we then used on social media.

Our most recent wholetime firefighter recruitment has seen our squad complete their training despite the difficulties that have arisen during these unique and unprecedented times, and their trainers have been full of praise for the squad's professionalism, adaptability, hard work and dedication during the pandemic.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, colleagues offered to give their time during evenings and weekends, volunteering to help move hospital beds between Braintree, Brentwood and Thurrock community care hospitals. Additionally, our staff delivered food and medicine to those residents who were vulnerable and self-isolating. Others have given up their Saturday mornings to litter pick at beaches so families can enjoy the county's coastlines.

This is in addition to our Service's work with the East of England Ambulance Service Trust, which has seen 19 of our on-call firefighters driving ambulances, and our Service driving instructors training 27 student paramedics and army volunteers to drive ambulance.

That just leaves one last thing left to say, and that's thank you. Thank you to everyone who continues to support us. For some, your support has shifted from attending our station events and open days, and instead you may be supporting us through engaging with us on our social media channels, following our safety advice, or passing on details of a vulnerable neighbour or person for us to visit. However you have supported us this year, thank you.

Jo Turton
Chief Fire Officer/ Chief Executive

Our Service

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service is one of the largest fire and rescue services in the country, serving a county which includes Stansted and Southend airports, Harwich seaport, Lakeside shopping centre, Coryton oil refinery, power stations, docks at Tilbury and parts of the M25 and M11 motorways.

Essex is a county of contrasts. It contains numerous ecologically important areas and manages one of the largest sections of coastline (350 miles) in the country. There are various conservation areas and over 14,000 listed buildings.

ECFRS provides prevention, protection and emergency response services from 50 fire stations and an Urban Search and Rescue facility.

The organisation is administered from its headquarters at Kelvedon Park in Kelvedon, where the Service also has a mobilising control centre.



Our Vision

Safe and secure communities are the bedrock on which we build success and well-being for all.

Our mission

Essex is a safe place to live, work and travel.

Our Values

We are open, honest and trustworthy

We are courageous in everything we do

We work as one team

We are always professional

We value the contribution of all

Our Service Leadership Team

Jo Turton

Chief Fire Officer/ Chief Executive

Rick Hylton

Deputy Chief Fire Officer

Dave Bill

Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Innovation and Change

Karl Edwards

Director of Corporate Services

Colette Black

Assistant Chief Executive
People, Values and Culture

Moira Bruin

Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Prevention, Protection, Response

Neil Cross

Chief Finance Officer
Section 151 Officer

Emily Cheyne

Assistant Director
Corporate Communications and Marketing

Our strategic priorities

Fire and Rescue Plan

The Fire and Rescue Plan sets out the priorities for fire and rescue services in Essex on how we will keep our communities safe.

Working with the public and alongside our partners, we created the plan to make sure we provide efficient and effective prevention, protection and response activities.

This report focuses on our achievements and actions against each of these Fire and Rescue Plan priorities:

1. Prevention, protection and response
2. Improve safety on our roads
3. Help the vulnerable stay safe
4. Promote a positive culture in the workplace
5. Develop and broaden the roles and range of activities undertaken by the Service
6. Be transparent, open and accessible
7. Collaborate with our partners
8. Make best use of our resources

Integrated Risk Management Plan

Our IRMP is our corporate plan and it focuses on how we achieve our strategic aims. Like all fire and rescue services, our IRMP identifies and outlines how we manage our communities' fire and rescue risks.

Our plan covers four years and will:

- reflect up-to-date information on how we manage risks to lives and properties in the Greater Essex area
- outline how we will enforce the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 as set out in the Statutory Code of Compliance for Regulators and the Enforcement Concordat
- demonstrate how we can best use our prevention, protection and response activities and resources to prevent incidents and manage risk;
- be reviewed each year and revised to make sure that we can act on it;
- show how we have used what we have learned from consulting our workforce, communities, representative bodies and partners; and
- be easily accessible.

Our year at a glance

April 2019- March 2020



April | Leigh-on-Sea Fire Station celebrates its 50 year anniversary.



June | Technical Fire Safety Team's Andre is recognised for his work to support the Fire Fighters Charity.



August | Passing out Parade for seven new wholetime firefighters.



May | Head of Technical Services, Steve, celebrates 40 years of service.



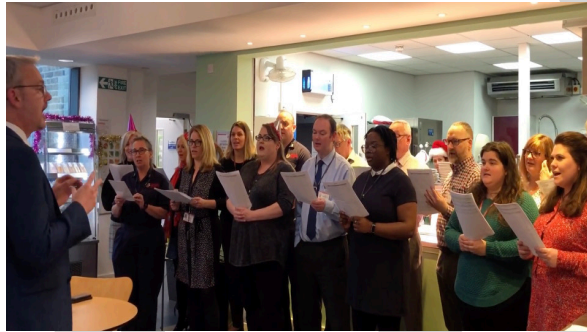
July | Halstead and Brentwood Fire Stations named in top four in country in energy saving competition Green Action. Both stations reduced their energy consumption by 17%.



September | Colleagues who have dedicated more than 20 years' service were presented with Long Service and Good Conduct medals at a special ceremony.



October | Road Traffic Collision extrication team are named Best Overall Extrication Team in UK Rescue Organisation competition.



December | Essex Fire Choir spreads cheer at Service Volunteer Recognition event and during the Christmas lunches at Service HQ.



February | Community Builder Les is recognised in a special event for celebrating 50 years in service.



November | ECFRS organises and hosts biggest of its kind, two-day exercise for search and rescue dogs from fire services and police forces across the UK.



January | Community Builder Les and Disability and Impairment Officer Paul are both to be awarded British Empire Medals (BEM) in the New Year's Honours.



March | Colleagues who have dedicated more than 20 years' service were presented with Long Service and Good Conduct medals at a special ceremony

Priority 1

Prevention, protection and response

Prevention

Keeping our communities safe and preventing harm is at the heart of all we do. We work in partnership with agencies such as our local authorities, district councils and other emergency services to ensure that:

- There is a joint understanding of risk, and that the most appropriate intervention from all partners is identified and agreed
- Our approach is intelligence led and targeted to individuals who are deemed vulnerable from:
 - Risk of fire
 - Risk of being killed, seriously injured on our roads
 - Risk of injury or death in the water
- Our prevention strategy and focus aligns with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and HM Government campaigns
- There is effective safeguarding of adults and children

- That we review and continuously improve delivery of our activities to ensure high quality, effective interventions
- We evaluate the work we deliver to ensure that we can demonstrate that we prevented an event from occurring

Accidental Dwelling Fires

We are focused on continuing to reduce the number of Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs), keeping our most vulnerable and communities in Essex safer. This number has been declining since 2017, but we know there is more work to do:

2019/2020	783
2018/2019	829
2017/2018	837

Education Programmes

By educating our children and young people in safety issues we make them aware of the dangers and consequences, enabling informed choices about their safety. At the same time, we can inform parents and carers about keeping their family safe.

Education Officers deliver safety awareness programmes to young people in Essex. The overall aim of the team is to help reduce the number of accidental dwelling fires and incidents of arson and hoax calls, among young people.

- The Education Team instructed 191,401 children across the county between April 2019 and March 2020.
- The Education team now cover all year 3, year 6, year 7, year 8 and year 9 children in the County: approximately 3580 classes (107,400 children).
- As part of the police collaboration, the Education team offers a Cyber Safety programme to all year 6 children in the county and a healthy relationship programme to all year 9 children. It also delivers knife crime prevention, gangs awareness and hate crime awareness across several year groups.

The Firebreak Programme

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service have been working with organisations and charities for more than 15 years to deliver life changing Firebreak courses to thousands of people in Essex.

Firebreak courses are run by a specially trained firefighters and uses many of the main firefighter training skills to boost the confidence, self-esteem and communications skills of it's participants.

The courses are run thanks to sponsorship by charities and organisations, including long standing partners like Down Syndrome Extra 21. The fire service hosted a Firebreak course with them in August 2019, which funded by the Worshipful Company of Firefighters.

The students on the course were a group of young people with Down Syndrome and their siblings who took part in the four day course held at Maldon Fire Station.

The students, aged between 13-24 years old, were guided through a series of challenging firefighting tasks by a team of firefighter mentors. Activities included using the powerful water hoses and ladders. The students were also taught a variety of life skills to help develop their communication, self-confidence and discipline as well as important fire safety lessons for independent living.

The Firebreak courses have a proven record of improving communication, confidence, and self-esteem in the students. The skills learned at the courses also have long-lasting effects. The Firebreak team check in with the students six months after the courses, and the feedback shows that the students continue to see improvement long after the courses finish.

Parent feedback

“This course has been great for the children taking part; it has given them a chance to show themselves and everyone else exactly what they are capable of. The determination they have shown during a week which is completely out of the ordinary for them has been incredible.

“Just over the course of the week I have seen him grow up and become more responsible. Every day he came home excited about going back the next day and learning even more.

“This was the best thing that has happened to our son in the past few years. In our opinion, the course has built his self confidence and self worth which will be very important in his future life.

“The skills which our son developed over the four days will be invaluable to him in his future. Having attended the pass-out parade we could see and enjoy evidence of the skills learned during the course.”

Fire Cadets and Duke of Edinburgh

The Community Development and Safeguarding Team currently supports 147 cadets at 18 Cadet Units. These units are based at six locations – Clacton, Dovercourt, Great Baddow, Harlow, Orsett and Southend.

Fire Cadets have the opportunity to earn a Duke of Edinburgh award as part of their cadet programme. After successfully applying to come back for second and third years, students have the opportunity become volunteer instructors, helping the course instructors with next year’s recruits, demonstrating drills and supporting training delivery.

In 2019/20 154 students successfully completed a Duke of Edinburgh award. 74 Bronze, 45 Silver and 35 Gold.

Protection

Our priority is to protect businesses, people, the local economy and the environment from fire and wider community-related risks. Our protection work is guided by the duties placed on us by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Our protection teams work towards reducing the impact of fire in commercial premises. The teams work closely with local businesses, supporting them to meet their fire safety responsibilities, guiding them on how to keep to regulations, and making sure protecting people from fire is their first priority.

We are committed to making our communities safer through appropriate regulation, while also using our enforcement and regulatory powers where necessary.

As with all fire and rescue services around the country, we are now reviewing our policies and procedures in line with the outcomes of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry reports. This will undoubtedly have an effect on fire safety nationally. We will make sure our organisation is in a position to be able to respond quickly and effectively to any recommendation made by the inquiry.

Our teams are involved in a number of activities to make sure our communities are safe. These include the following:

- Inspection and audit
- Statutory consultations

- Undertaking enforcement activities as appropriate
- Carrying out activities associated with Higher Risk Residential Buildings (HRRBs)
- Reducing unwanted fire signals

Statutory Consultations

As well as auditing premises to check compliance with fire safety regulations, experienced team members are involved at the design stage of new buildings through planning where ECFRS are consulted by local authorities on access and water supplies to new premises. **In 2019-20 Inspecting officers received 506 planning consultations.**

In addition to planning consultations the Inspecting Officers also receive consultations on new build premises and other premises where there is to be a material alteration to that building.

In 2019-20, Inspecting Officers dealt with 1315 Building Regulations consultations.

Licensing applications are also processed by the Protection Team as the Service are a statutory consultee. Premises require a licence for a number of reasons, for example the sale or supply of alcohol, to provide regulated entertainment, or to provide late night refreshment. **In 2019-20 Inspecting Officers received 506 licensing applications.**

CASE STUDY

Bolton Student Accommodation Fire Response

Following on from the large fire in a student accommodation Block in Bolton in November 2019. The TFS Department implemented a thematic audit programme of student accommodation and buildings within Essex.

During this audit programme TFS Officers engaged with those responsible for premises providing Higher Education to ensure that the premises were safe and give advice as appropriate.

It was clear that external cladding was an issue for the Fire Service in Bolton, in particular High Pressure Laminate (HPL) cladding.

Some premises in Essex had already been identified as having this type of cladding and the Service had been liaising with those responsible for the buildings to ensure steps were being taken to mitigate the risk and ultimately replace the cladding.

During the thematic audit programme over a hundred buildings were audited within a 4 week period.

Think Sprinkler Strategy

In 2013, the Service agreed to pledge £250,000 per year to match fund sprinkler installations across buildings and accommodation in Essex, and that match funding continues today.

The money we invest in this scheme is used to provide funding for local authorities, housing associations and charities to fit sprinkler systems and protect the most vulnerable people in our county. Since it started, we have invested over £600,000 in this scheme and we are committed to continuing this valuable work.

Did you know?

There is a common belief if a fire starts in a property that has sprinklers fitted, that every sprinkler head will activate, flooding a property. This is untrue. Individual sprinkler heads will only activate when the room temperature reaches a certain point. The heads operate as individual heat sensors – water is only released in the area where there is a fire. In 60% of cases, fires are controlled by the spray from four sprinklers or fewer.

Firefighters often use 15 times more water from hoses to do the same job as a sprinkler does alone.

CASE STUDY

Parkside Tower - saving lives with sprinkler installation

Parkside Tower in Chelmsford was the first building in Essex that we awarded funding to for a sprinkler system. Two years after the system was installed, a fire started in a flat and the sprinkler system activated. The fire was quickly extinguished, there were no injuries and there was so little damage that the occupant did not need to be rehoused.

Comparing this to a property without sprinklers, residents would be forced to evacuate, possibly along with the other flats on that floor, the fire would continue to develop until fire service intervention.

A spokesperson for the housing provider for Parkside said: “The safety and well-being of our customers is always our top priority. The sprinkler system at Parkside Tower is a key part of the building’s fire safety and prevention measures, and has already proven to be an effective in preventing the spread of fire and protecting our customers. We would like to thank ECFRS for working in partnership with us on the installation of the sprinkler system and other fire safety measures at Parkside.”

The total cost of the retrofitting project at Parkside Tower was £187,000 this also included other works to the flats such as replacement lighting etc. and ECFRS made a contribution of £50,000 to the retrofitting of sprinklers.

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Response

We respond to a variety of emergencies, including fires, road traffic collisions, specialist rescues, maritime incidents, flooding, and incidents relating to hazardous materials. To make sure we can respond effectively we have a modern fleet of fire appliances, including specialist appliances such as aerial ladder platforms, heavy rescue pumps, incident command units and water rescue units. We also have equipment, vehicles and firefighters used to support fire and rescue services across the country, which include urban search and rescue, high-volume pump, hose layers and tactical advisers.

We will continue to monitor the development of new technologies and make sure we have in place new and effective ways of working.

We have a robust monitoring and debriefing process which allows us to analyse all the operational work our crews carry out. This reassures us that we are continually improving the safety and effectiveness of our crews.

Where appropriate, we share learning nationally through the joint operational learning and national operational learning platforms.

The Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority ('the Authority') has set response standards for the attendance of fire engines at fires and other emergencies.

Incident numbers across Essex over the last five years

	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Total	15,033	15,513	15,570	15,645
Fires	4,580	4,935	4,771	4,973
Special services	4,502	4,283	4,485	4,626
False alarms	5,951	6,295	6,314	6,046

Operational assurance and lessons learned

We have two response standards defined within our Integrated Risk Management Plan:

First attendance to potentially life-threatening incidents Target - average of 10 minutes	
2019/2020	10 minutes 6 seconds
2018/2019	10 minutes 26 seconds
2017/2018	10 minutes 7 seconds

First attendance to 90% of all incidents within 15 minutes	
2019/2020	87%
2018/2019	87%
2017/2018	87%

Injuries and fatalities

We work to reduce the number of fatalities and injuries that occur in fires. These have decreased every year for the last four financial years.

	Primary fire fatalities	Primary fire injuries
2019/2020	2	65
2018/2019	4	67
2017/2018	7	74
2016/2017	7	88

Operational assurance and lessons learned

Our Operational Assurance and Assessment team assesses the compliance with relevant legislation, regulations and guidance, and best practice. The team also assesses compliance with the behavioural and ethical standards set for the organisation.

We debrief and learn from incidents, identifying areas for improvement as well as opportunities to share information, learning and best practice.

In 2019/20 there were 142 debriefs carried out by our Service.

Appliance availability

We maximise the availability and utilisation of resources within our operational response model.

During 2019/20 our fire appliances had availability of 81%.

Our Central Resourcing Team and our Control Team consistently monitor the availability and levels of resource within Essex. This includes those at station ready to respond and those already attending incidents across the county.

Total pumping appliance availability	
Target - 94%	
	Average
2019/2020	81%
2018/2019	84%
2017/2018	85%

CASE STUDY

Every year, thousands of people across Essex find themselves involved in or witnessing an emergency.

Instinctively, they all dial 999.

But who are those reassuring, ever-present voices on the other end of the line? Well, they're our Control Operators. Based in our Control Room at our Service Headquarters in Kelvedon, they're there 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. They're people like Julie, who manages Red Watch, and Jason, who oversees our Control training. With more than 30 years of experience in Control between them, they've been part of responding to thousands of incidents in what is a truly unique part of our Service.

"Every response to an emergency starts in the Control room, so if we can get our bit right, we know that we can help to make sure there's a positive outcome," Jason said. "One of our biggest strengths is our ability to stay calm," added Julie. "We see things on a county-wide basis, so we can understand the bigger picture of what resources we have available, how things are developing and what actions we need to take."

But it isn't always easy. The cliché that no two days are the same is never truer than when it comes to Control – and together, as a close-knit team, they overcome a range of challenges.

Control

Service Control is responsible for answering 999 calls from members of the public, our partner agencies and our staff and, where appropriate, mobilising the appropriate response to the emergency.

999 call volumes

Year	Calls	Incidents
2019/20	30,542	15,033
2018/19	32,595	15,513
2017/18	31,909	15,570

Another vital part of this role includes liaising with our blue light partners including Essex Police and East England Ambulance Service, as well as contacting third party providers such as National Rail, Highways Agency, energy companies and water companies.

Control are also responsible for answering and dealing with administrative calls from across the Service from Stations and Support services.

To ensure we can respond to 999 calls and incidents as efficiently and effectively as possible, Control also hold the responsibility for ensuring the Service maintains its fire cover throughout the county, which simply means making sure we have appliances distributed across Essex in such a way that we can reach all incidents within our agreed response times.

“We tell people to never assume we’re aware of an incident and to always call 999, but naturally that means we end up with lots of callers when there is a traffic collision or fire on a busy road,” Julie said. “It’s not unusual for us to get 40 calls for the same car fire on the M25, for example.”

“The bit that you then don’t see or hear is what happens away from the phones,” Jason added. “It’s not just the volume of calls we receive, but the background and supporting of every incident that we have to do as well. Incident Commanders, crews and partner agencies all need to share and receive regular updates - at a big incident, that can be a lot of people that need information: all at exactly the same time.”

Larger incidents naturally need more support – and attract more public attention. But, while a large fire or serious road traffic collision takes place, other emergencies continue happening across Essex, which also need Control’s support.

“There are always other incidents. Just because we’re managing an incident with 15 or 20 crews and its high-profile, it doesn’t mean we can let other calls go without a response,” said Julie. “Every incident has to be handled efficiently – regardless of what else is happening.”

“It’s like plate-spinning when it comes to managing several incidents at once,” Jason explains.

“You’re constantly going backwards and forwards keeping everyone up to date as things progress, which can often mean

repeating yourself: but that regular supply of accurate and timely information is essential.”

So what can you do to help Control if you need them in an emergency?

“One of our biggest challenges can be establishing where you actually are when you call us, which is obviously essential before we can help,” Julie said.

“What3Words has been brilliant in helping us do that quickly and accurately – sometimes an address just isn’t helpful, particularly if the person is in a remote area.”

The app, which is now used internationally and is available on all mobile devices, groups the world into billions of locations that are three metres squared. Each one has a unique three word combination, meaning it can easily be explained over the phone – and crews can then reach the right location.

“Once we know where you are, the best thing you can do to help us is stay calm and give us the information we need. If you panic, that’s when it starts to become difficult,” Julie added. “We’ll do everything we can to re-assure you but, when you dial 999, you become our eyes and ears for the emergency – so we need you to try and get across what’s happening so we can respond appropriately.”

Our Service responds to more than 15,000 emergencies each year – and every single one of them starts with people like Julie and Jason.

Priority 2 Improve safety on our roads

In 2019/20, 828* people were killed or seriously injured on the roads in Essex (* provisional Essex Police figure). While the number of casualties has been falling over time, the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads remains unacceptably high.

Road safety is therefore a key priority for ECFRS; it is included as such in the Fire and Rescue Plan 2019-2024, and the current and emerging Integrated Risk Management Plan. This also aligns with the road safety priority in the Essex Police and Crime Plan 2016-2020.

As a key partner of the Safer Essex Roads Partnership (SERP) we are working to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads in Essex. We have a range of initiatives designed to help all road users, including:

- FireBikes
- Community Wheels
- FireCars
- Ford driving simulator
- Virtual-reality road safety

In 2019/20 our Road Safety and RTC Reduction Team attended and delivered 392 separate events, engaging with 39,000 road users on various aspects of road safety risk and consequence.

FireBike team helps to reduce motorcycle KSIs to lowest in six years

The number of motorcyclists who were killed or seriously injured on Essex roads in 2019 has fallen to a six-year low. In 2019, there were 176 incidents, a 33% decrease compared to the highest number in six years at 263 incidents in 2016.

Our partnership with the Safer Essex Roads Partnership has seen us working closely with motorcyclists to reduce their risk on the roads. One way our Service has worked to achieve a lower risk to motorcyclists is through our FireBike courses, a series of free courses ran by our Road Traffic Collision Reduction team to promote motorcycle safety.

In 2019, the FireBike team delivered 36 FireBike courses to 282 motorcyclists who learned about the risks and consequences of riding on the roads as well as advanced riding techniques. The course covers a range of topics from promoting safe riding, the benefits of protective equipment and the benefits of advanced rider training.

One FireBike course attendee said: “Thank you very much to you and the guys for the training day on Sunday. I came with an open mind but a little sceptical. I couldn't believe how much I learnt about me and my bike which has made me feel far more confident as a rider. My ability to brake and corner has vastly improved which was obvious on my journey home.”

While another said: “I just wanted to drop you a note to say a massive thank you for having me on your courses this summer as what I learnt on them has not only improved my riding generally but also certainly saved me from a nasty crash tonight.”

As well as delivering our FireBike courses, the FireBike team also attends events across the county to promote safer riding with motorcyclists.

In 2019, the team attended 38 events across Essex and promoted safer riding to almost 2,500 motorcyclists.

Andy, RTC Reduction Team Manager said: “Motorcyclists are very vulnerable out on the roads and they are sadly over-represented in road traffic collisions. FireBike is our way of engaging with riders and encouraging them to undertake further training to improve their skills.

“Our Better Biking Course seeks to get riders thinking differently about the risks and consequences of riding out on the roads and why collisions happen, and underpins all this with assessed rides out on the roads to teach some advanced riding techniques.

“Our Advanced Machine Skills Course, which is held at an airfield site, teaches key machine handling skills that every biker needs – and needs to practice – including slow speed manoeuvring, emergency avoidance techniques, leaning and cornering skills and emergency braking.

“What we teach on our courses can make a real difference in the ability of bikers to reduce and control the risks they face and to be able to respond effectively to emergency situations and thus help avoid injury collisions”

Priority 3 Help the vulnerable stay safe

ECFRS staff and volunteers undertake Home Safety (HSV) and Safe and Well visits across Essex, to help the most vulnerable in our communities.

The main aims of our Home Safety and Safe and Well visits are:

- To reduce the number of accidental house fires in Essex
- To reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured as a result of house fires.

We offer two types of visit.

1. A Home Safety visit by firefighters, volunteers and other community safety staff. This visit focuses on giving people advice on fire safety around the home.
2. A Safe and Well visit by highly trained Safe and Well Officers. This more in-depth visit aims to improve the health and well-being of the more vulnerable people in our communities, by advising them on where they can get support

Number of Home Safety/Safe and Well Visits

	Total Number of Visits	Safe and Well Visits	% of visits that were Safe and Well
2019/2020	7,718	5,288	69%
2018/2019	8,401	5,992	71%
2017/2018	8,600	5,992	70%

The vast majority proportion of home safety visits in 2019/2020 were with persons ages 65 and over. There was also over 3,000 visits conducted for persons that lived alone as well as those that had a disability.

	Over 65 years old*	Lived alone	Has a disability	Lived in social housing
2019/2020	5278	3248	3053	525
2018/2019	5023	2814	2363	465
2017/2018	5087	3127	2727	680

People who have receive a Home Safety intervention from ECFRS have the option to fill out an evaluation form.

The responses to date are summarised in the following table:

Number of evaluation forms returned to ECFRS	621
Percentage of evaluations that scored their experience of Home Safety at 9 or 10 (out of 10)	93%
Percentage of evaluation respondents that learned something that would help them to stay safe from fire or crime in the future	92%

CASE STUDY

Helping the vulnerable stay safe in their homes

Through her partnership with a local authority, Community Builder Di was informed of hoarding in a three bedroom mid-terrace house. Knowing this was a fire hazard for the occupants and their neighbours, Di arranged a home safety visit.

With every room almost unusable and full of items dating back decades, Di talked the couple through the risks of hoarding and encouraged them to open up about the issue.

Di performed a full fire and home safety visit throughout the house, and as well as giving fire safety and home security advice, she spoke on contacting organisations for finance advice emotional support.

As there were no smoke alarms, Di installed one on each level of the house, immediately making the couple safer in their home.

On a revisit a couple of months later the couple showed Di how they had already started clearing the house and were ecstatic to report they had been able to invite family over and enjoy Christmas dinner together in their home.

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Priority 4 Promote a positive culture in the workplace

Our people are at the heart of making sure that involving the community is one of our main priorities, helping relationships and trust to build and strengthen over time.

People and Leadership

Our objective is to have a safe and diverse workforce who we enable to perform well in a supportive culture underpinned by excellent training. We do that so we have a forward looking, innovative and collaborative culture that can deliver against the changing needs of our communities.

Fair, kind and inclusive workplace

Every one of our people has the right to be treated fairly, inclusively, with kindness, equality, dignity and respect.

	Female	Majority age band	LGBTQ+	Ethnic minority	Disabled
Wholetime FFs	6.4%	46-55	1.7%	2.3%	1.4%
On-call FFs	1.4%	25-35	0.2%	2.3%	1.4%
Control	83.8%	25-35	5.4%	2.7%	0.0%
Support staff	52.8%	56-65	2.8%	3.7%	4.0%
Overall	16.5%	46-65	1.6%	2.6%	1.9%

Note the figures for gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity reflects the % of those who have completed this data.

Dignity at work

We have 52 Dignity at Work Supporters, who provide peer support and are a route for colleagues to seek support, education and signposting. The sessions provide a space to discuss bullying and harassment by exploring the natural behaviours that enable unacceptable behaviour in the workplace to occur, continue and thrive. **We have delivered 39 of these sessions 2019/20.**

Well-being, health and safety

Investing in well-being helps us to live our commitment to better working lives. Delivering Mental Health Awareness training has been part of living this commitment. In 2019/20 we offered **X** training sessions. Feedback from these sessions indicate that **x%** felt the session met their needs.

Resourcing and talent management

We know we need to have the right people and skills to deliver the best service to our communities in Essex. In 2019-2020 we recruited 83 on-call firefighters, and 58 wholetime firefighters (Source: Annual Workforce Report).

All of our wholetime firefighters in 2019 have been trained using the apprenticeship route. This is part of our commitment to maintaining professional standards and to fulfilling the Public Sector Apprenticeship Targets.

Engaged and valued

We know that rewarding and recognising our people is part of a positive, kind culture. In 2019 we ran our third ***Celebrating our People*** annual award event, and continue to run our monthly recognition awards.

Over the course of 2019/2020, 56 people have been recognised through our monthly awards.

We asked our people to have their say in helping us choose the award categories for the 2019 Celebrating our People Awards. Using a short survey we introduced three new categories, one was Outstanding Contribution to the Service. This award was for an individual or team who exceeded target/expectations or met targets/expectations in the face of adversity/challenge.

It recognised employees that offer innovation, outstanding and mutually beneficial solutions that have made our Service better. Our 2019 winner had been experiencing extremely challenging circumstances in relation to accuracy of data within the Incident Recording System.

Not only did these challenges and inaccuracies affect our winner but also our stations and the people we serve. To help tackle the issue, the winner implemented a training and awareness programme for stations on using IRS – in doing so developing positive working relationships with fire station watches and crews.

Training

Our training strategy makes clear our commitment to offering training opportunities so that all of our people have the skills and behaviours they need to flourish and remain safe in their work.

In 2019/20 we invested heavily in our Operational Training resources and facilities and budget was agreed for:

- A new Safe Working at Heights rig
- Increased capacity to deliver hot fire training
- Refurbishment all of our breathing Apparatus chambers

We completed the first phase of a Core Skills Assurance Programme, launched a new set of online operational training products and provided enhanced casualty care training to 602 firefighters.

CASE STUDY

Service talent pool

"Persevere, keep positive and use the support available to you". Station Manager Nick says the support he received from our Service's talent pool was invaluable in helping him to achieve his promotion goals.

Nick joined our Service as an on-call firefighter in Frinton in 2003 and became a wholetime firefighter based in Clacton four years later and then our Training Centre. Having gained some insight into other opportunities on offer, he was interested in progressing his career.

He said: "I really enjoyed the roles I had and, as I was exposed to more roles, I got the appetite to move on to the next level. "I appreciate it isn't for everyone, but I was interested in the new roles and really had a go at it."

Nick was involved in the On-call Liaison Officer pilot in 2016 before becoming Watch Manager at Chelmsford Fire Station two years ago.

Last month, he was promoted to Station Manager for Operational Risk and Community Risk in North Essex.

Nick joined our Service's talent pool in 2018. This process works with colleagues with the potential to take on greater responsibilities when opportunities become available.

Nick's application was supported by his line manager and his line manager's manager and he was accepted onto the Talent Pool process. He was invited to an assessment centre where he had to complete activities, which were assessed against a number of competencies.

Nick said: "What I liked about the assessment was the roles and scenarios were very practical.

"I was so impressed with assistance I got on the day of the assessment. I knew exactly what to expect right from the start. They added new bits to the Station Manager assessment from the Watch Manager assessment, but they kept the routine the same, so the process was consistent."

It wasn't all plain sailing for Nick. He failed one of his job interviews, but he was able to use the feedback he received to prepare for his next attempt.

He said: "I wasn't very good at interviews and I didn't pass. Jane and Vicki looked at feedback and gave me a development plan where I could improve and give me a better chance next time.

"I got support with my PQAs (Personal Qualities and Attributes) applications, briefings and coaching sessions to plan for my assessment.

"The Talent Pool makes sure there is consistency with promotions; you know exactly what you need to do."

Nick says the whole process has been a positive experience and he would encourage colleagues considering a promotion to get involved.

He says the Talent Pool will help you to overcome disappointments and develop yours skills - as long as you stick with it and stay positive.

He said: "I really had a go at it and despite, some setbacks, I kept on going.

"Some people might get disheartened but I kept positive and concentrated on my personal development. I knew exactly what I had to do, and the Talent Pool really helped me to keep that focus."

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Priority 5

Develop and broaden the roles and range of activities undertaken by the Service

Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2016 to 2020

As required by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, the Government outlines its expectations of English Fire & Rescue Services through the National Framework for Fire and Rescue Authorities. One of the Government's expectations is the assessment of local risks to life and how effectively resources are used in response to those risks, at the same time providing value for money to the local taxpayer – this is called an Integrated Risk Management Plan.

Our 2016-2020 IRMP considered four key elements:

1. What are the existing and potential risks in Essex?
2. How effective are our current community risk management measures?
3. What standards should be set for the Fire and Rescue Service's activities?
4. What resources are necessary to meet those standards?

The plan was informed by two 12 week consultations to obtain the views and opinions of the public of Essex, partners and stakeholders, and of course our employees at the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service. This plan puts emphasis on prevention work, helping people avoid having fires and other emergencies, further reducing the demand on our response services, while still providing an effective and professional response service.

Our Commitments

- Getting our first attendance to potentially life-threatening incidents within 10 minutes (on average) from the time we receive a call
- Getting our first attendance to all incidents within 15 minutes on 90% of occasions from the time we receive a call
- Giving safety messages to every school child in Essex
- Ensuring there is a working smoke alarm in every household
- Working with partner agencies to meet the other social needs of vulnerable members of our communities
- Supporting the installation of systems such as sprinklers to protect buildings and their occupants
- Working with drivers and riders to reduce the number of people killed or injured on our roads

IRMP 2016 to 2020 How did we do?

IRMP performance measure	Target	Performance	
		2019/2020	2018/2019
Average time to attend a potentially life threatening incident	10 minutes	10 min 3 secs	10 min 26 secs
Percentage of incidents attended within 15 minutes	90%	87%	87%
The number of schools who received safety messages	100% (by 2020)	75%	82%
The percentage of Essex homes with a working smoke alarm	100% (by 2020)		91%

Integrated Risk Management Plan 2020-2024

Throughout the financial year 19/20 we have been undertaking work to formulate our new IRMP for the period 2020 to 2024. This process included two public consultation exercises. It is important to us to seek views from the communities that we serve to ensure that the plans we are making for our Service will deliver the Services to the public that they expect to ensure we make Essex a safe place to live work and travel.

The new IRMP was approved by the Authority, and came into effect on 1 June 2020. Our plan covers four years and will:

- Reflect up-to-date information on how we manage risks to lives and properties in the Greater Essex area
- Outline how we will enforce the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 as set out in the Statutory Code of Compliance for Regulators and the Enforcement Concordat
- Demonstrate how we can best use our prevention, protection and response activities and resources to prevent incidents and manage risk
- Be reviewed each year and revised to make sure that we can act on it
- Show how we have used what we have learned from consulting our workforce, communities, representative bodies and partners
- Be easily accessible

Change and Innovation

On-call Liaison Officers

The On-Call Liaison Officer team has worked with stations to help increase focus on recruitment promotion and publicity, develop partnerships and engagement with local businesses and employers.

Working with Corporate Communications, the OCLO team have driven and supported innovative approaches to the ways in which we recruit, train and support on-call employees, including targeted recruitment campaigns for the day crew stations converting to on-call, the wider use of social media, and adopting the use of advanced video techniques to promote the role of on-call firefighters and opportunities.

The work of the On-Call Liaison Team has directly contributed to an increase in the number of new on-call firefighters, increased operational availability, and have become a well-established and highly valued part of the Service.

Day Duty Officers Riding

The Day Duty Officers Riding Project was initiated to support the availability of on-call stations and wider service delivery, and ensure that employees working the Day Duty System were able to maintain required operational competence and fitness levels.

Since the start of the project there have been an additional 267 days covered by day duty officers, enabling additional availability of on-call stations.

Mobile Data Terminals and Devices on appliances

The Devices for Appliances project over the course of five months planned and managed 193 installations into 110 different Service vehicles. The upgraded Mobile Data Terminals and Devices on appliances sought to improve front lines crews access to risk information and operational policy and procedure. The Devices on appliances have also delivered a platform for data capture.

HR and Payroll system

2019 saw the introduction of a new HR and Payroll system.

The new system provided end-users with a more detailed self-service offering within a modern looking interface.

The new system was successfully integrated with our existing applications and provided our administrators with a comprehensive set of reporting tools. The decommissioning of the previous system has resulted in annual savings in excess of £100,000 due to reduced infrastructure, maintenance and licensing costs.

Technology

New technology is the key to developing our Service and the way in which we protect the public. In order to support how we manage risk, it is important that our ICT infrastructure is modern and effective and makes the best use of new technologies.

An example of how we are using technology is the app 'What 3 Words', which allows our control room to pinpoint a caller's location within an area of 3 square metres. This means we can respond more quickly and more precisely to an emergency call, and so maybe improve the outcome.

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Priority 6

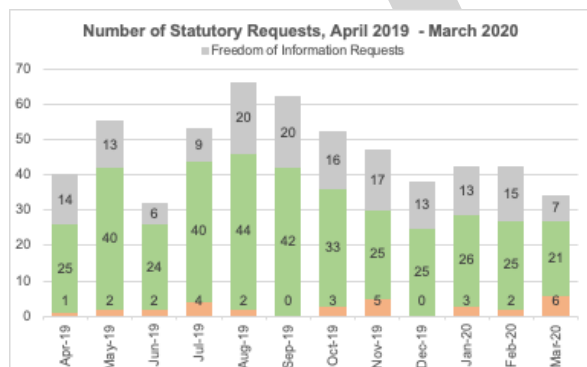
Be transparent, open and accessible

Statutory Request

We have responsibilities to process and respond to statutory requests made under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), Environmental Information Regulations and Data Protection Act. We have a statutory deadline to respond to 90% of those requests in 20 days. In 19/20 we replied to 95% of statutory requests within the statutory deadline.

2019/2020 statutory requests

- 163 FOIs - topics included HR/Recruitment, Fleet, ICT, Policy and Finance. All responses to FOIs can be viewed on our transparency pages on our website.
- 370 Environmental Information Requests which were primarily requests for fire reports following an incident.
- 30 Subject Access Requests were processed in 19/20



Performance measures

The most effective way to save lives and to reduce injuries and other losses through fires and other emergencies is to reduce the number of incidents that happen.

We track and report on our prevention activities through a range of measures. We also recognise the importance of considering how these work together to make our communities safer.

These are the measures we will report to the public on, telling them whether we have met our target (our current targets are in brackets).

- Rate of accidental house fires
- Number of primary fire injuries
- Fires in non-residential properties
- First fire-engine attendance to a potentially life-threatening incident (within an average of 10 minutes)
- Percentage of incidents attended within 15 minutes (90%)
- Reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured on Essex roads (40% reduction over 10 years)
- Percentage of accidental house fires affecting vulnerable groups
- Increase in staff confidence
- Average number of days or shifts lost per person per year (6.9 days)
- Percentage of year-end appraisals completed (100%)
- Percentage of freedom of information enquiries responded to within 21 days (90%)
- Percentage of complaints responded to within 21 days (90%)
- Reduction in the number of false alarms

Open and accessible with our public

The use of strategic and tactical communication in emergency services is ever-changing, but a constant is the evidence that such activity is vital in a number of ways.

Communication can be used to raise awareness, correct inaccurate information or “fake news”, campaign for behaviour change and support positive action recruitment - reaching communities that might now have thought about a career with our Service before.

We use a range of channels to communicate with the public. We check in with our public and employees through a range of polls and surveys, to ensure that we are telling a narrative that people want to engage with, in a way that is accessible and favoured by them.

Communications in ECFRS also specifically supports and delivers against operational activity and priorities as set out in the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

Performance monitoring and management framework

To make sure we can monitor our performance against the Fire and Rescue Plan and the IRMP, we have developed a performance framework. This framework includes a continuous improvement board who will meet regularly to discuss progress.

The Police Fire and Crime Commissioner receives highlight and exception reports each month, monitoring and analysis reports every three months, and an end-of-year performance report. These are available to the public and are published externally.

As part of the ongoing review of this IRMP, we will continually review our performance measures to make sure that our performance is monitored and managed across all parts of our service, in line with the priorities laid out in the Fire and Rescue Plan.

Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) is responsible for carrying out inspections of fire and rescue services in England and Wales.

All 45 fire and rescue services are monitored for efficiency, effectiveness and how they manage their staff. HMICFRS also provides an overview of the performance of fire and rescue services in England and Wales. We were inspected in July 2019. Our report was published in December 2019 and is available by visiting www.essex-fire.gov.uk/hmicfrs

Priority 7

Collaborate with our partners

We know that we are better able to achieve our aims and objectives across all areas of the Service by collaborating and working in partnership with others who have similar aims and goals – these include other emergency services and public sector organisations, charities, voluntary groups and other fire and rescue services. Not only does this improve the service we each deliver, it also makes financial sense to remove duplication and share resources.

In 2017 the revised Policing and Crime Act directed emergency services to consider collaboration in the interests of efficiency or effectiveness.

Alongside Essex Police and East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust, we are exploring how our skills and resources are used in the most effective way for the people of Essex. Leaders from all three organisations have signed up to the Emergency Services Collaborative vision: ***Working together, we will deliver safe and secure communities to enable people to thrive.***

Collaboration with emergency service partners

- Joint Procurement initiatives have been agreed and implemented including Temporary Agency Recruitment and replacement of printers (estimated saving of £359K)
- Shared use of estates - 11 on-call stations are now available for Police to use as a drop-in facility, and the police rural engagement team also have access to these.
- Safe Well and Secure visits to our communities include fire safety and crime prevention messaging
- 15 classrooms available via ECFRS headquarters for use by Essex Police. This financial collaboration benefits of sharing classrooms is currently £62K over ten years
- Operational collaboration - A new procedure has been developed to reduce the number of phone calls between the two control rooms and this has resulted in a reduction of 70% of calls between Police and Fire meaning increased capacity for both control rooms to deal with public calls.
- Essex Fire attends calls from EEAST to gain entry to properties. This has been operating since May 2016 and on average fire attend 30 to 40 calls per month in place of operational police officers, which returns on average 60 hours to policing per month.
- Station Managers attended Firearms Training days to observe and undertake multi-agency training including Marauding Terrorist Attack (MTA) scenarios to help increase development and collaboration between services.

The Essex Resilience Forum (ERF)

The Essex Local Resilience Forum is a multi-agency partnership that's made up of representatives from emergency services, other local public services, local authorities and the NHS.

Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 every County in the United Kingdom is required to establish a resilience forum.

Through the Essex Local Resilience Forum (LRF), we are prepared and rehearsed for a number of issues and scenarios. We do it every month of every year for issues such as bad weather, major disasters on our transport network or pandemic health crises.

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Priority 8

Make best use of our resources

Ensuring that we have an efficient Service that offers value for money underpins everything we do. The Authority is responsible for ensuring that our Service's business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

The Authority also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way our Service's functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The Authority has also established a local pensions board to support it on scheme governance and administration. The former Essex Fire Authority agreed a four year Efficiency Plan on 7 September 2016. The Statement of Accounts includes an Annual Governance Statement that sets out a review of the key financial controls. The Statement of Accounts for the financial year that ended on 31 March 2020 was published June 2020.

In 2019/20, the Authority's total planned net expenditure was £74.1m.

66% of the net expenditure of the Authority is funded by Council Tax, payable by householders in Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock.

The balance of funding is provided by central government, through a share of non-domestic rates and revenue support grant. Specific grants provided by the government, for example to support the Authority's Urban Search and Rescue unit are included in operational income.

Overall employment costs were £0.7m under budget for the year. The Authority continued to process the recruitment of wholetime firefighters and during the financial year a cohort of 47 wholetime firefighters joined the Service.

The underspend on premises and equipment is due to two main factors:

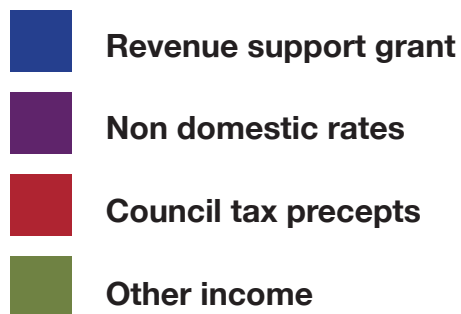
1. Property and building maintenance is underspent by £251k as some works have been rescheduled:
2. Information technology costs are £272K underspent, this is mainly as a result of supply delays for a significant ICT project.

Financial governance

Each year we publish sets of accounts for public consumption. These documents explain our financial performance over a given financial year which always runs from April 1 to March 31. Recent versions of these documents are available on our website: www.essex-fire.gov.uk

2018/19	Net Revenue Expenditure	2019/20		
		Latest approved budget £000	Actual expenditure £000	Variance overspend/ (underspend) £000
30,037	Wholetime firefighters	34,251	33,308	(943)
5,636	On call firefighters	6,692	6,782	90
1,422	Control staff	1,438	1,365	(73)
13,330	Support staff	13,914	14,176	262
50,425	Total Employment Costs	56,295	55,631	(664)
2,010	Support costs	2,196	2,336	140
10,250	Premises and equipment	10,717	10,163	(554)
3,248	Other costs and services	3,443	3,248	(195)
2,320	Ill health pension costs	2,250	2,261	11
1,380	Lease and interest charges	1,393	1,301	(92)
4,973	Revenue provision for Capital Financing	5,100	4,781	(319)
24,181	Total other costs	25,099	24,090	(1,009)
74,606	Total Gross Expenditure	81,394	79,721	(1,673)
(4,239)	Operational income	(7,305)	(8,878)	(1,073)
70,367	Total net expenditure out turn	74,089	71,343	2,746
	Funding			
9,347	Revenue support grant	8,337	8,337	-
16,697	Non domestic rates	16,196	16,569	373
702	Council tax collection account	643	643	-
44,079	Council tax precepts	46,233	45,695	(538)
213	Collection fund adjustment account	-	731	731
(671)	Contribution (to)/ from reserves	2,680	(632)	(3,312)
70,367	Total funding	74,089	71,343	(2,746)

Funding



Capital expenditure

We invested £1.2m in our property portfolio mainly on fire stations and training facilities. The main project was £0.4m on the refurbishment of Ongar Fire Station.

In addition there was spend of £0.7m on ICT and operational equipment and £0.9m on vehicles, which included £0.7m invested on four specialist off road vehicles.

At 31 March 2020 the Authority had capital expenditure commitments of £0.4m.

2019/20	Approved capital expenditure	Actual capital expenditure	Variance over spent/ (underspent)
	£000	£000	£000
Property	2,600	1,193	(1,407)
Vehicles	1,480	863	(617)
Information systems and equipment	1,810	741	(1,069)
Total capital payments	5,890	2,797	(3,093)
Internal resources	5,890	2,797	(3,093)
Total capital funding	5,890	2,797	(3,093)

Draft

Our HMICFRS inspection results

In summer 2017, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) began inspecting the efficiency and effectiveness of all fire and rescue services in England. Formerly known as Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), the name was changed to reflect the addition of fire and rescue services.

HMICFRS independently assesses fire and rescue services on how we prevent, protect against and respond to fires and other emergencies as well as how well we look after our staff.

In summer 2019 HMICFRS inspected ECFRS for the first time, and in December 2019 it published a report of its findings.

The three areas they looked at can be summarised as:

- How effective are we at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
- How efficient are we at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
- How well do we look after our people?

There are four possible outcomes in the judgement criteria:

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires Improvement
- Inadequate

HMICFRS graded ECFRS as “requires improvement”.

Effectiveness	
Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies	Requires Improvement
Preventing fire and other risks	Requires Improvement
Protecting the public through fire regulation	Requires Improvement
Responding to fires and other emergencies	Good
Responding to national risk	Good
Efficiency	
Making best use of resources	Requires Improvement
Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future	Good
People	
Promoting the right values and culture	Inadequate
Getting the right people with the right skills	Requires Improvement
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	Requires Improvement
Managing performance and developing leaders	Good

The report recognised good areas of performance, and concluded that the Service is particularly good at:

- Responding to fires and other emergencies
- Responding to national risks
- Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future
- Managing performance and developing leaders

The report has also highlighted that ECFRS requires improvement in preventing fires and other risks, protecting the public through fire regulation, promoting the right values and culture and ensuring fairness and promoting diversity. These are areas where the Service is already taking actions to address.

Inspectors highlighted good examples of the Service's prevention work, including how it is contributing to making the County's roads safer as part of partnership working with Safer Essex Roads Partnership, and how it understands the needs of its local communities.

The report also recognises that ECFRS is good at managing performance and developing leaders.

Since the inspection, the HMICFRS team has revisited ECFRS to review the building inspection action plan and approach. They welcomed the Service's action plan and were encouraged by the improvements that have already been made.

Statutory responsibilities

As a Fire and Rescue Service we have legal responsibilities under multiple pieces of legislation. We aim here to explain what responsibilities fall under which piece of legislation.

Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

The Act replaced the Fire Services Act 1948 with a new legislative framework to ensure fire and rescue services were better able to meet the particular challenges of the 21st century.

The Act clarifies the duties and powers of fire authorities to:

- Promote fire safety
- Fight fires
- Protect people and property from fires
- Rescue people from road traffic incidents
- Deal with other specific emergencies, such as flooding and terrorist attacks
- Do other things to respond to the particular needs of their communities and the risks they face.

Civil Contingencies Act 2004

Under Part One of the Act, emergency services and local authorities (defined as Category One responders) have a legal obligation to assess risk, plan and exercise for emergencies and undertake business continuity management

Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

The Fire and Rescue National Framework sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in England. It was updated in May 2018.

The priorities within the framework are for fire and rescue authorities to:

- Make appropriate provision for fire prevention and protection activities and response to fire and rescue related incidents
- Identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue risks their areas face
- Collaborate with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the service they provide
- Be accountable to communities for the services they provide
- Develop and maintain a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse.

Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 replaces most fire safety legislation with one simple order. It means that any person who has some level of control within a premises must take reasonable steps to reduce the risk from fire and make sure people can safely escape if there is a fire. The Order applies to virtually all buildings, places and structures other than individual private dwellings, for example a family home or individual flats in a block.

Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007

This outlines the additional statutory duties of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 for fire authorities.

The duty requires authorities, where provision of resources has been made by central government, to respond to incidents both within and outside the authority area involving Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear hazards (CBRN) and Urban Search and Rescue (USAR).

Localism Act 2011

The aim of the Localism Act was to devolve more decision making powers from central government back into the hands of individuals, communities and councils. The Act covers a wide range of issues related to local public services, with a particular focus on the general power of competence, community rights, neighbourhood planning and housing.

The key measures of the Act were grouped under four main headings:

- New freedoms and flexibilities for local government
- New rights and powers for communities and individuals
- Reform to make the planning system more democratic and more effective
- Reform to ensure decisions about housing are taken locally.

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Equality Act 2010

Under the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Service must have due regard to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people of different protected characteristic groups.

Data Protection Act 2018

The Act is a complete data protection system, so as well as governing general data covered by the GDPR, it covers all other general data, law enforcement data and national security data.

Furthermore, the Act exercises a number of agreed modifications to the GDPR to make it work for the benefit of the UK in areas such as academic research, financial services and child protection.

The Act aims to:

- Make our data protection laws fit for the digital age in which an ever increasing amount of data is being processed
- Empower people to take control of their data
- Support UK businesses and organisations through the change
- Ensure that the UK is prepared for the future after we have left the EU

Health and Safety at Work Act

Our Service recognises and accepts the responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of our employees and undertakes to protect people, assets and the communities in which we work.

To achieve this, we meet all relevant requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (together with all other statutory provisions associated with it) and supports staff in meeting their obligations under the act.

Detailed health, safety and welfare specific arrangements, based on the Health and Safety Executive's methodology, are set out in our Health and Safety Policy and associated framework of policies, which have been developed to take relevant legislation, guidance and industry best practice into account.

The policies provide employees with relevant and comprehensive information on the risks they face and the preventative and protective measures required to minimise them.

Quarterly inspections are carried out on all our premises and any defects are reported and monitored until completed. There is a shared common understanding of the Service's mission, values and beliefs and a positive health and safety culture is fostered by the visible and active leadership of Senior Managers.

Our Health and Safety Team continually develops and improves systems for monitoring and improving the effectiveness of our Health and Safety Management Systems. These processes include peer Health and Safety Audits.

A productive relationship has been established between the Health and Safety Trade Union Safety Representatives and the Health and Safety Team.

Health and Safety statistics

Over the last four years, there was a 11% reduction in accidents across the Service.

	Accidents	Attacks on FSP	RIDDOR *
2019/2020	109	18	22
2018/2019	118	19	28
2017/2018	121	20	30
2016/2017	123	20	17

*RIDDOR - Reporting of injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrence regulations

Feedback and recognition

Feedback

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service is fully committed to providing the highest possible levels of service to the communities in Essex.

In 2019/20 we reviewed and updated our compliments and complaints and whistle-blowing policies. This in part was to adapt our policy to incorporate our new Governance arrangements but also to ensure that members of the public had clear information on how they could complain to us and what level of service they could expect when they did.

Compliments

We love to know when you have received especially good service from us.

This feedback is useful because it helps us to learn about the things we are doing right, so we can make sure we carry on doing those things in the future.

Complaints

Sometimes things do go wrong. Hearing about times when we've not met your expectations helps us to improve the service we provide.

In 2019/20 we received 50 complaints, and responded to 81% of those within the 20 day target.

We will always make sure your complaint is dealt with quickly, fairly and consistently.

Getting in touch

If you would like to send us your feedback please email: compliments.complaints@essex-fire.gov.uk or call: 0300 303 5555.

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Helpful links

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service website: www.essex-fire.gov.uk

ECFRS and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS): www.essex-fire.gov.uk/hmicfrs

Fire and Rescue National Framework for England:
www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-and-rescue-national-frameworkfor-england

IRMP – more information from ECFRS: www.essex-fire.gov.uk/irmp

Fire and Rescue Plan:
www.essex.pfcc.police.uk/what-we-are-doing/fire-rescue-strategy

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