



Essex County  
Fire & Rescue Service

# **Strategic Assessment of Risk**

## **Introduction**

### About

The priorities within the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (2018) 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 related 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 service they provide.
- Develop and maintain a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible, and diverse.

Place upon all fire and rescue services the requirement to strategically assess their delivery against each of these areas on a regular basis. Essex County Fire & Rescue Service undertakes its Strategic Assessment of Risk annually in line with the financial year to ensure it is aligned to these priorities.

## CONTENTS

Executive Summary .....	4
Purpose .....	7
Scope .....	7
Risk Management .....	9
References .....	10

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Strategic Assessment of Risk for 2023-2024 has been reviewed and updated to reflect the Fire Standard recommendations for the Community Risk Management Plan, to which this document provides the basis for its further analysis and commitments to resourcing Essex County Fire & Rescue Service over the next 4 years.

To align this document with the recommendations as set out by the National Fire Chief's Council through the Fire Standards Board changes have been made to the format and structure of the Strategic Assessment of Risk 2023-2024. This includes providing both a single complete version of the Strategic Assessment of Risk in one document as well as 8 separate documents providing the chapters of the Strategic Assessment of Risk 2023-2024. By doing this, the Service hopes to enable greater interaction and ease of use when referring to this document for specific areas of interest. The new Strategic Assessment of Risk 2023-2024 will also be made available through SharePoint under the Community Risk Management Plan site for all within the Service to view and access as required.

To support the alignment with both the Fire Standard and the Service's use of PESTELO risk analysis, the Strategic Assessment of Risk 2023-2024 has been structured into 8 separate chapters, each aligned to an element of the PESTELO risk model as well as providing an introductory chapter. Each chapter contains key themes which are then broken down into detailed sections highlighting the risk analysis of that area of interest within Essex. Where relevant, sections have also been provided on the national risk picture to provide context to the statistics and analysis of data found within Essex.

Throughout the Strategic Assessment of Risk 2023-2024, where reference is made to Essex this incorporates all districts, boroughs, and cities within the County of Essex as well as both Southend and Thurrock Unitary Authorities and their combined areas of responsibility.

Key considerations for the Service in relation to the political landscape include the upcoming general elections, whilst all parties continue to keep safe and secure communities at the heart of their messaging this could be delivered through different practices under each of the main parties. Progressing through parliament at this time are both the Fire Sector Reform paper and a bid for devolution made by the combined authorities of Essex, the outcomes of each of these leading to potential changes in governance structures to fire and rescue services. All of this is followed closely on from the near realisation of Industrial Action taken by the Fire Brigade Union and within the context of wider public sector trade union disputes.

## Strategic Assessment of Risk - Introduction

Within the current economic climate of high inflation rates, supply chain uncertainty and a cost of living crisis, financial pressures are being exerted on the Service to provide the agreed increases to pension funds and pay awards whilst balancing this against an uncertain income. Whilst the council tax and business rate precept has been increased, this can only be guaranteed for a short term duration and with business and societal patterns changing following COVID-19 cannot be depended upon for mid to long term financial planning.

Known risk factors in the population in Essex have been shown through the 2021 Census to remain a continuing trend and projection into the future. These risk factors include an aging population, an increasing number of people with mental health and obesity conditions and an increase in those requiring paid for supportive care. What is also shown to have remained consistent is the areas of Essex with the highest concentration of risk factors known to lead to incidents, including household overcrowding linked to fuel poverty which links to crime and antisocial behaviour. Part of the changing societal picture of Essex highlights the increase in alternative gender and sexual identities, an increase in non-UK languages predominantly European and Asian and an increase in the variety of religious beliefs held by the people of Essex. Each of these characteristics contribute to the changing needs of people and how they engage with the Service.

An area of considerable pace of change is that of technology, boosted by restrictions placed upon organisations during COVID-19, technology and its use within the Service has increased significantly over the past few years. Whilst technological change can be positive, the speed at which it is occurring is outstripping the skills and knowledge of users with a greater need for individual data control. The Service is in the final steps of implementing a new Control software system which should provide greater resilience and usability; however, this should be considered in relation to the ongoing telecommunications upgrades within the UK and specifically to emergency service communication devices and channels. Alongside this, the continued development of green infrastructure and vehicle fuels poses both opportunities and challenges to the Service as legislation and regulation attempt to keep pace.

Another key consideration for the Service is the impact of climate change on the environment and how this will likely impact the resourcing and requirements of the Service in the future. Met Office data shows that average ground temperatures will increase by 35% over the next 50 years whilst simultaneously the precipitation rate will decrease by 99%. Within the built environment the landscape of Essex will change through the increasing development of infrastructure and housing, including the incorporation of green infrastructure to support carbon zero policies such as large scale Battery Energy Storage Sites and Solar Farms. Consideration should

## Strategic Assessment of Risk - Introduction

also be given to how significant an impact COVID-19 has had on societal behaviours and the knock on impact these have upon transport use and supply chain provision as was experienced through the recent potential for UK wide energy disruption over the winter months of 2022-2023.

The Service delivers departmental strategies which incorporate how they are aligned with relevant legislation and provide assurance of compliance against the requirements placed upon a fire and rescue service in the delivery of its duties. The Service is also able to strongly evidence how it is responding to the public inquiry recommendations following the Grenfell Tower Fire and Manchester Arena Bombing. These are progressing along with the introduction of Fire Standards and the Fit for the Future programme, both of which the Service is fully invested in engaging with and delivering best practice for.

In comparison to Essex population data the Service remains under-represented by certain demographics, including females, non-White ethnicities, and those of religious beliefs other than Christianity. Whilst the Service is committed to improving its equality there is considerable work to be done to closer resemble the community it serves. Incident data in comparison to national figures show Essex to have a higher prevalence of incidents to the English mean, although the figures for incident occurrences over the past 5 years in Essex have been decreasing, with the exception of water rescue incidents.

Overall the Strategic Assessment of Risk 2023-2024 highlights those areas which continue to pose a consistent level of risk as well as those which pose an increasing or emerging risk to be considered when delivering the Community Risk Management Plan.

### **PURPOSE**

The Strategic Assessment of Risk is designed to identify the risks likely to impact Essex County Fire & Rescue Service in delivery of its strategic objectives.

The content of the Strategic Assessment of Risk is used as the foundation to inform the planning requirements of the Community Risk Management Plan.

### **SCOPE**

Within the Strategic Assessment of Risk, the following chapters will break down the detail of risks categorised using the PESTELO analysis model. These are Political, Economic, Societal, Technological, Environmental, Legislative and Organisational.

Chapter 2 – Political Risk considers the national and local political context in which fire and rescue services operate, taking into account sector reports and the governance under the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. It also considers the Service engagement with the Representative Bodies who support our employees and the Service's overall governance model.

Chapter 3 – Economic Risk considers the national and local economic context in which fire and rescue services operate, taking into account pay awards and financial contributions such as council tax collection. It also outlines the Service financial model and how this is broken down to deliver funding across our portfolio of activity delivery.

Chapter 4 – Societal Risk explores the demographics of the population of Essex, Thurrock and Southend utilising census data and the Essex Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to understand their health and wellbeing. It also considers aspects of crime and antisocial behaviour that has a direct impact on fire and rescue services.

Chapter 5 – Technological Risk looks at emerging technologies, including green infrastructure and alternatively powered vehicles, as well as the myriad ways of communicating effectively and the potential impacts of cyber related attacks on the Service infrastructure.

Chapter 6 – Environmental Risk reviews the built environment of Essex, Thurrock and Southend, considering the risks inherent in different institutions and infrastructure requirements for populated areas. It also looks at the projected impact of climate change on Essex and Service engagement with future infrastructure developments.

## Strategic Assessment of Risk - Introduction

Chapter 7 – Legislative Risk considers how each of the main themes of delivery for a fire and rescue service is held to account by legislation, and what Essex County Fire & Rescue Service is doing to ensure it is compliant.

Chapter 8 – Organisational Risk explores the Service, the people and resources which support the delivery of its activities, the partnership and collaboration engagement and how the Service monitors its performance.



## RISK MANAGEMENT

Essex County Fire & Rescue Service employs Enterprise Risk Management Processes to deliver its Risk Management Strategy. Within this, risk is assessed to determine its likelihood of materialising, its level of severity, and the probable consequences. Risk treatment plans are then developed to bring prioritised risks into acceptable parameters.

Risks are assessed and allocated against the levels depicted in Figure 1 below:

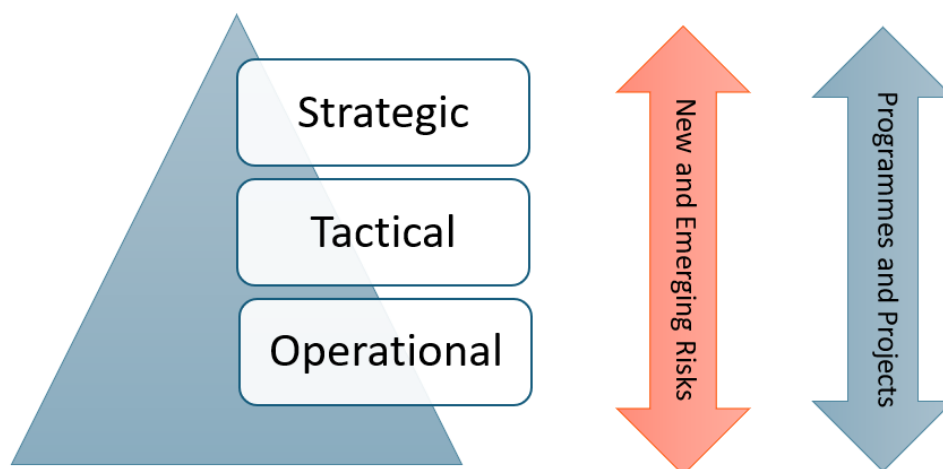


Figure 1

Strategic risks are owned and managed by the Service Leadership Team, where the consequences of the risk not being managed will be felt 3-5 years after the event.

Tactical risks are owned and managed by the Extended Leadership Team, where the consequences of the risk not being managed will be felt 1 year after the event.

Operational risks are owned and managed by local managers, where the consequences of the risk not being managed will be felt immediately after the event.

New and emerging risk identification is driven by the Service Leadership Team in order to build resilience into the Service by anticipating risk events, preparing to respond and adapt to the impacts felt.

Change risk identification is driven by programmes and projects initiated to improve services in order to reduce the variability of outcome and successful transfer to business as usual upon completion.

## REFERENCES

[Fire and Rescue National Framework for England \(2018\)](#)

Risk Management Strategy 2023