



Essex County
Fire & Rescue Service

Strategic Assessment of Risk

Organisational Risk

About

Nationally, there continues to be a drive for reform within the fire sector, analysis from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) highlighting the need for more diversity within the workforce, increased accountability and productivity, and a greater ability to demonstrate value for money and innovation.

Under the remit of the National Fire Chiefs Council, they have picked up the mantle for sector reform through its 'Fit for the Future' programme, highlighting the themes of Service Delivery; Leadership, People, Culture; and National Infrastructure and Support.

In addition to the work being driven forward by the Fire Standards Board, the public inquiries into the Manchester Arena Bombing and the Grenfell Tower Fire (both in 2017) present significant findings and recommendations for the fire and rescue sector to address.

Within this chapter of the Strategic Assessment of Risk, the following areas will be considered:

- Our Service
- Our Incidents
- Partnerships and Collaboration
- Public Inquiries
- Monitoring Performance

CONTENTS

Our Service	5
Our Area	5
Our People	5
Our Resources	10
Our Strategy	12
Our Mission	12
Our Incidents	14
National Incident Statistics	14
Local Incident Statistics	16
Dwelling Fires	17
Fatal Fires	19
Road Traffic Collisions	21
Water Rescue	22
Cross Border Incidents	24
Response Times	28
Public Inquiries	30
Grenfell Tower Fire	30
Manchester Arena Bombing	31
Partnerships and Collaboration	33
Essex Resilience Forum	33
Emergency Services Collaboration	34
Cross Border Working	36
National and Joint Operational Learning	36
Engagement with Representative Bodies	37
Stakeholder and Public Engagement	38
Monitoring Performance	40
HMICFRS Inspection Outcomes	40
Fire Standards	41
Fit For the Future	42
Internal Audits	43

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

References..... 45

OUR SERVICE

OUR AREA

Essex County Fire & Rescue Services is one of the largest fire and rescue services in the country, serving 1.8 million residents. Essex is home to two airports Stansted and Southend, and Harwich seaport, Lakeside shopping centre, Coryton oil refinery, power stations, docks at Tilbury and along the Thames, seven underground stations and parts of the M25 and M11 motorways.

Alongside this, our county contains many ecologically important areas, one of the largest sections of coastline (320 kilometres) in the country, various conservation areas and over 14,000 listed buildings. We are a county of real contrasts, made up of people who have differing needs.

OUR PEOPLE

As of February 2023, the Service currently employs 615 whole time firefighters, 519 on call firefighters, 43 control firefighters and 338 support staff (with the number of on call firefighters including those with additional contracts elsewhere in the Service).

In addition to maintaining an appropriate distribution of Level 1, 2, 3 and 4 Incident Commanders across the operational workforce, the Service also maintains a number of specialist officer roles including:

National Roles:

- 8x Detection, Identification and Monitoring Officer
- 2x Urban Search and Rescue Tactical Advisor
- 1x High Volume Pump Tactical Advisor
- Flood Water Rescue Tactical Advisor
 - Currently the Service does not have an officer in this role and any suitable candidate would have to be approved by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs / National Resilience Assurance Team
- Wildfire Tactical Advisor
- Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive Tactical Advisor
- Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive Tactical Commander
- Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive Strategic Commander
- Airwave Tactical Advisor

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

- UK International Search and Rescue Lead Coordinator

The Service does not have a national requirement for fulfilling these roles, with the exception of the Detection, Identification and Monitoring Officers, and the Urban Search and Rescue Tactical Advisors. However, it would put the Service at risk not to ensure Officers were trained in these specialisms.

Officers who undertake a nationally required specialism must attend all training and events as this is a mandatory requirement for international deployments. This can lead to pressure on the duty rota and other officers to ensure an appropriate level of cover is maintained within Essex to support all mobilising offers.

Local Risk Based Roles:

- 20x National Inter Agency Liaison Officer
- Hazardous Materials Advisor
- Fire Safety Officer
- Water Incident Management Officer
- Level 2 Fire Investigation Officer
- Petrochemical Officer
- Monitoring Officer
- Duty Officer
- Executive Officer
- Principal Officer
- Control Duty Officer

For our local requirements a Health and Safety risk assessment has been completed to develop our mobilising offers to ensure that all incident types have the appropriate resourcing allocated. Without appropriate resource there is a risk both to the public and to the Service.

Currently the Service does not identify key performance indicators for the locally required specialisms, including workforce planning and minimum numbers for duty rotas. This is being considered as part of a flexi rota review which is due for completion in May 2023.

Additionally, specialisms, other than Incident Command roles, do not form part of the terms and conditions of firefighter role maps and therefore no individual is required to undertake the additional training and duties associated with specialisms. This poses a persistent risk to the Service should an individual choose to rescind their specialism offer, or as part of natural workforce turnover no new officers choose to take up the additional role. Due to this, key performance indicators and minimum

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

requirements for duty rotas must be carefully negotiated with the representative bodies.

The Service also has a legal requirement to employ a Chief Finance Officer and Health and Safety Advisor.

The graphs below show how Essex County Fire & Rescue Service (ECFRS) Employees compare to the population of Essex.

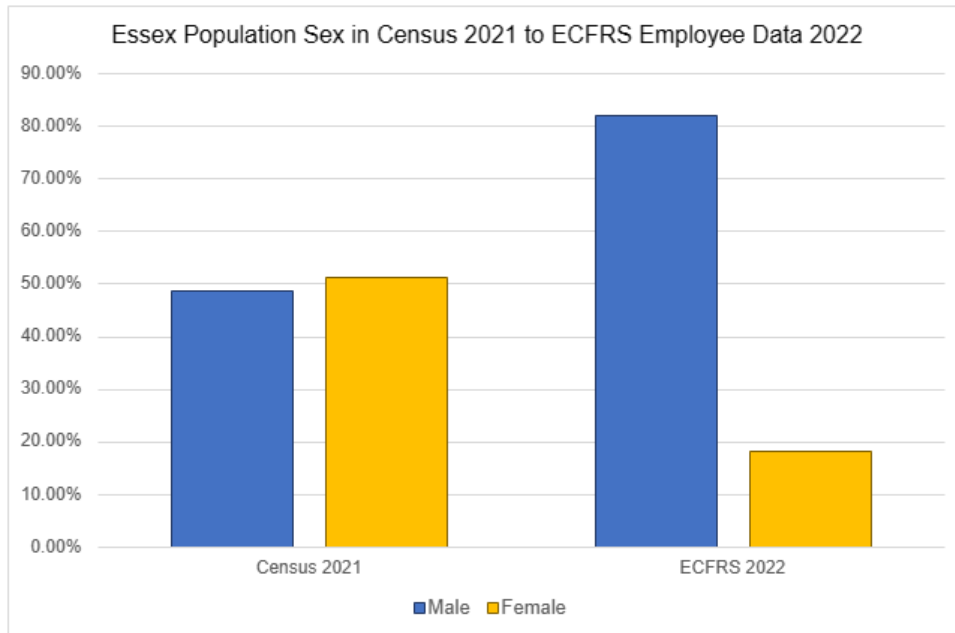


Figure 1

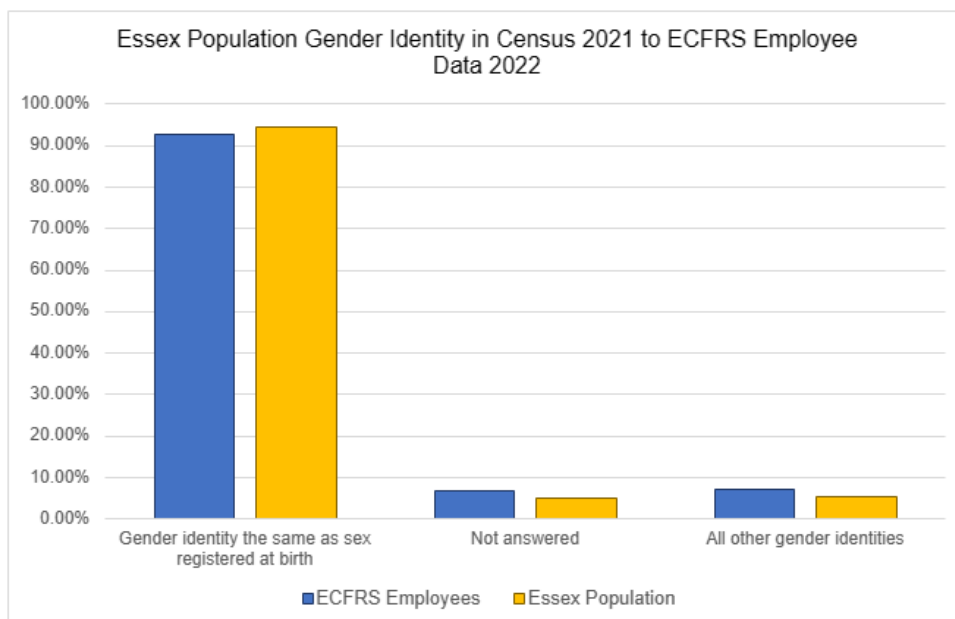


Figure 2

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

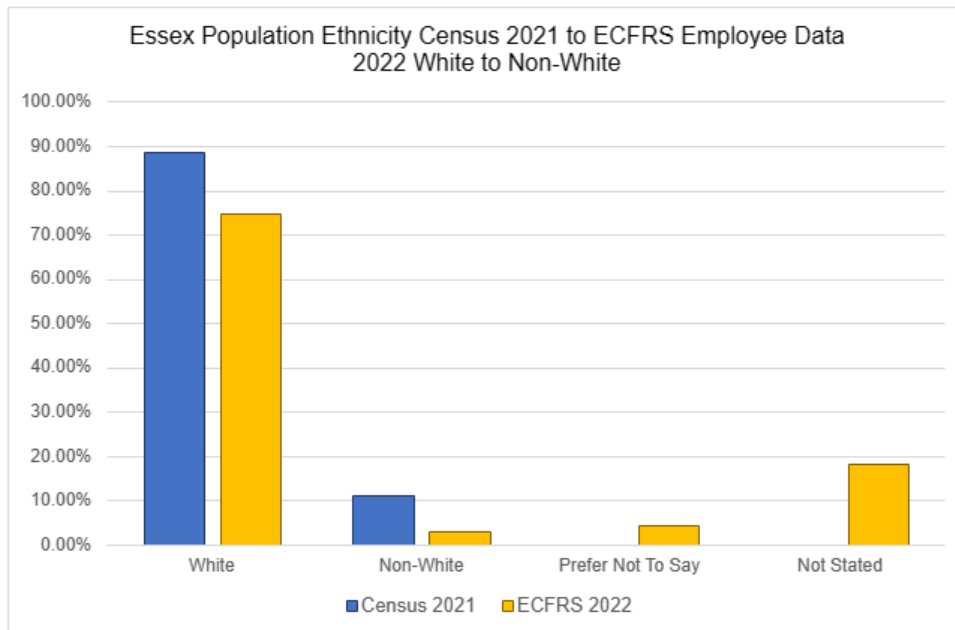


Figure 3

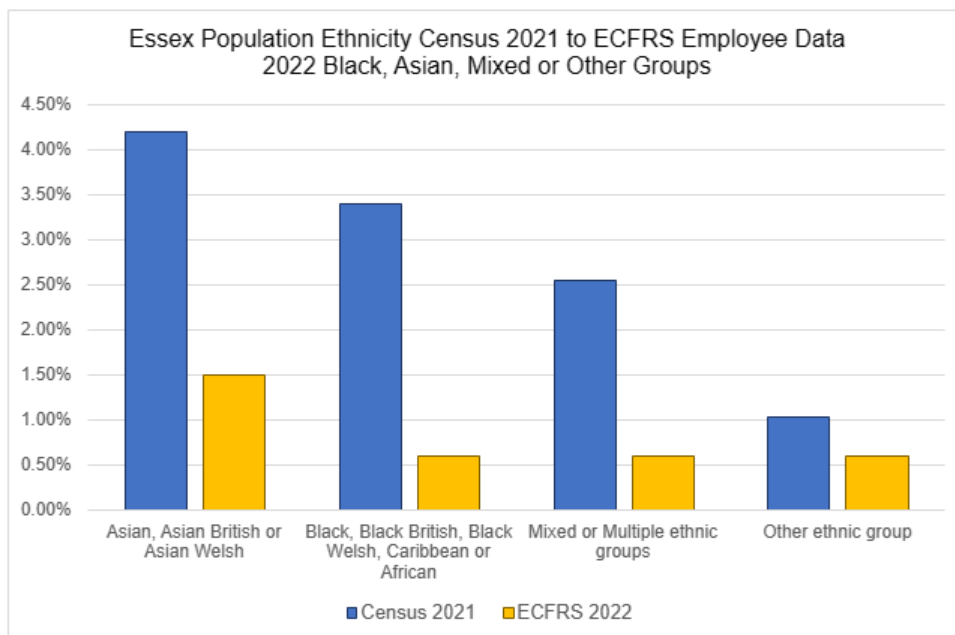


Figure 4

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

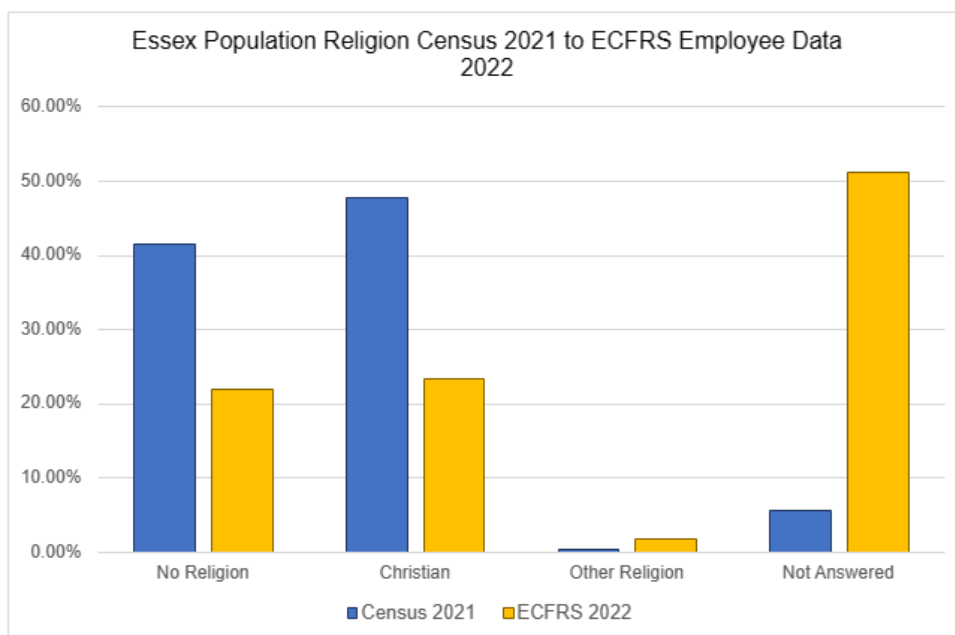


Figure 5

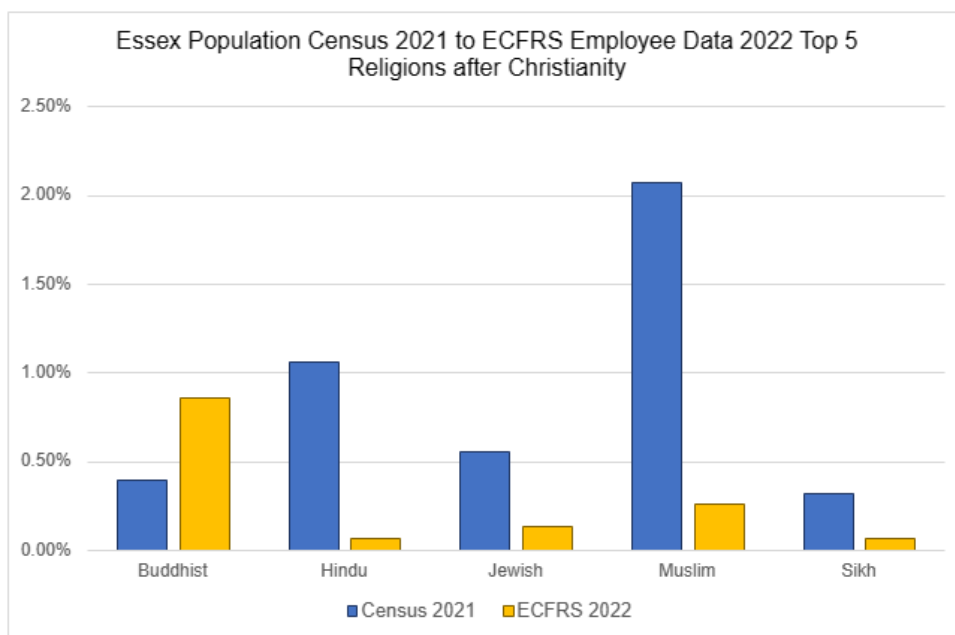


Figure 6

These graphs depict how the Service is doing against its Equality commitment to be an inclusive employer, that delivers inclusive services and takes proactive steps to recruit a diverse workforce. Figures 1, 4 and 6 highlight areas where the Service is not truly representative of the general population of Essex and where it could consider focusing future recruitment drives.

This disparity between the workforce of Essex County Fire & Rescue Service and the people of Essex also identifies areas where the Service may need to develop the

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

knowledge and understanding of its current workforce to ensure they are able to effectively engage with the public.

OUR RESOURCES

The Service currently has 12 whole time stations and 38 on call stations situated across Essex, Thurrock and Southend as depicted in Figure 7.

These are divided into 4 Command Areas each sitting under the responsibility of a Group Manager.

Stations in Green are identified core stations, these are determined by the high level of risk in the surrounding area and must maintain operational fire cover at all times.

North West Command	South West Command	North East Command	South East Command
Braintree	Basildon	Burnham-on-Crouch	South Woodham Ferrers
Coggeshall	Billericay	Maldon	Hawkevell
Halstead	Wickford	Tillingham	Leigh
Witham	Brentwood	Tollesbury	Rochford
Dunmow	Ongar	Colchester	Southend
Leaden Roding	Ingatestone	Tiptree	Shoeburyness
Newport	Grays	Brightlingsea	Canvey Island
Stansted	Corringham	Manningtree	Rayleigh Weir
Harlow Central	Orsett	Wivenhoe	Chelmsford
Old Harlow	Epping	West Mersea	Great Baddow
Saffron Walden	Loughton	Dovercourt	
Sible Hedingham	Waltham Abbey	Clacton	
Thaxted		Frinton	
Wethersfield		Weeley	

Table 1

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk



Figure 7

In addition to standard pumping appliances, the Service also maintains a fleet of specialist vehicles, including:

- Aerial Ladder Platform
- Animal Rescue Unit
- Ballistic Van
- Bulk Foam Module
- Detection, Identification and Monitoring Unit
- Environment and Salvage Module
- HazMat Unit
- Heavy Rescue Pump
- High Volume Pump
- Hose Laying Lorry
- Incident Command Unit
- Off Road Vehicles
- Water Bowser
- Welfare Module
- Water Rescue
- Decon Ranger

OUR STRATEGY

Launched in 2019, our Fire and Rescue Plan is the first of its kind produced by a Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, and is consequently a landmark for fire governance, not only for Essex, but for the whole country.

It sets out the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner’s vision and priorities for the delivery of fire and rescue services in Essex. The plan will run from 2019 to 2024 and will be the basis on which the Commissioner holds the Service to account for our performance.

The eight priorities are:

- Enhance prevention, protection, and response.
- Promote a positive culture in the workplace.
- Develop and broaden the roles and range of activities undertaken by our Service.
- Help the vulnerable to stay safe.
- Collaborate with our partners.
- Be transparent, open and honest.
- Improve safety on our roads.
- Make best use of our resources.

Beneath the Fire and Rescue Plan sits the Community Risk Management Plan which in turn feeds into the Service’s key strategies.



Figure 8

OUR MISSION

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

Our values are:

- We are open, honest and trustworthy.
- We are courageous in everything we do.

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

- We work as one team.
- We are always professional.
- We value the contribution of all.

Our 10 priorities are the things we've committed to improving and want to excel at as a Service.

- Equality
 - To be an inclusive employer, that delivers inclusive services and takes proactive steps to recruit a diverse workforce.
- Technology
 - Improve our systems and hardware to enhance productivity and connectivity.
- Fire Protection
 - Deliver our role as part of the Building Safety Regulations and embed the outcomes of the Building Risk Review into our Inspection Programme.
- Leadership Development
 - Introduce a Service wide programme for the leaders of today and the potential ones for the future, to support workforce planning.
- Prevention
 - To reduce fire deaths to zero and contribute towards the Safer Essex Road Partnership vision zero.
- Fire Standards
 - Implement national standards to ensure best practice, support cooperative working and provide greater efficiencies.
- Operational Training
 - Provide quality training and facilities, to respond to the risks we face with assurance of competence.
- Property and Facilities
 - Develop our property portfolio to meet and support the wellbeing needs of our workforce as well as our communities.
- On-Call Firefighters
 - Increase our recruitment and retention; exploring flexible crewing models to improve response times.
- Risk
 - Adopt a performance and data driven approach to best use our resources to respond to new and changing risks more appropriately.

OUR INCIDENTS

NATIONAL INCIDENT STATISTICS

The Home Office collects detailed information on incidents attended by fire and rescue services in England. The Service uses this data to benchmark its performance against the other fire and rescue services within the country. This benchmarking allows the Service to identify areas for further improvement.

The following graphs depict some of the key statistics in relation to incident responses for the past two financial years. (Figures 9, 10, 11 and 12).

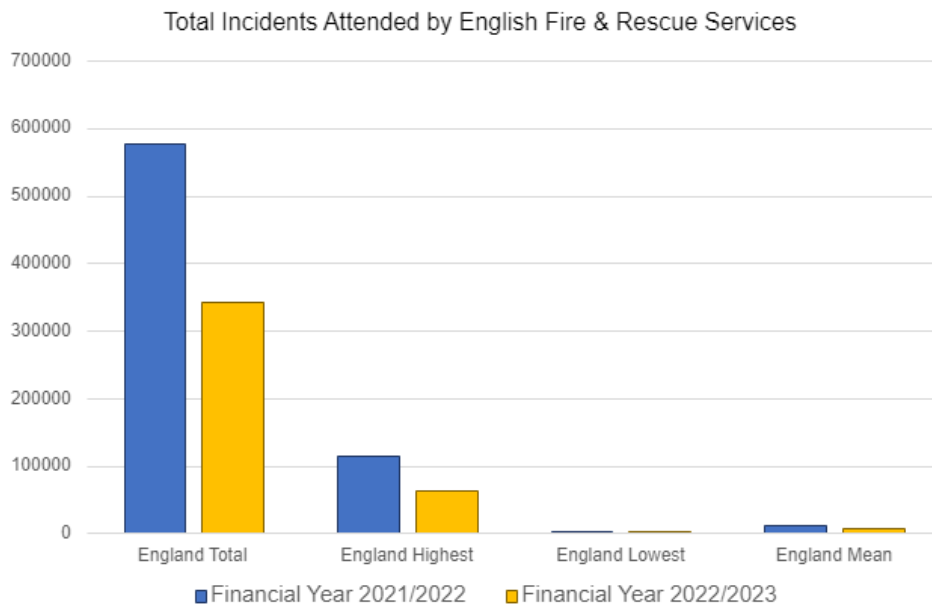


Figure 9

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

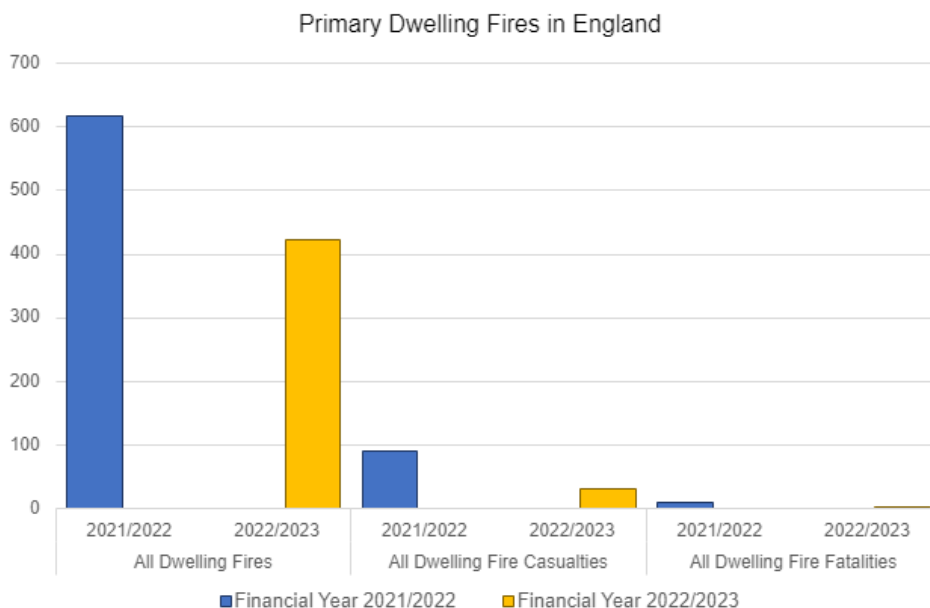


Figure 10

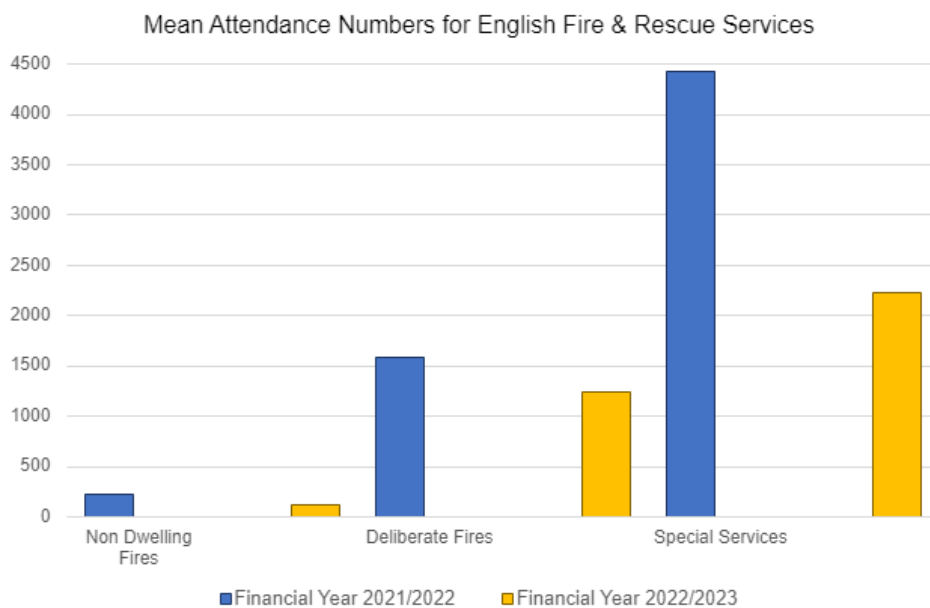


Figure 11

The above three graphs (Figures 9, 10 and 11) show a reduction in incidents across the main areas of Service delivery – primary dwelling fires, non-dwelling fires, deliberate fires and special services. This data should be reviewed against a longer-term picture and Prevention and Protection activity delivery to identify if this is a continuing trend with evidence to suggest it is supported by those additional areas of Service delivery.

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

However, the graph below (Figure 12) shows an increase in response time to all incident types. Additional analysis to map the locations of incidents to fire stations, cross referenced with resourcing availability could provide greater insight into the reasons for this. Consideration should also be taken in relation to the continuing impact of COVID-19 on incident statistics and societal behaviour.

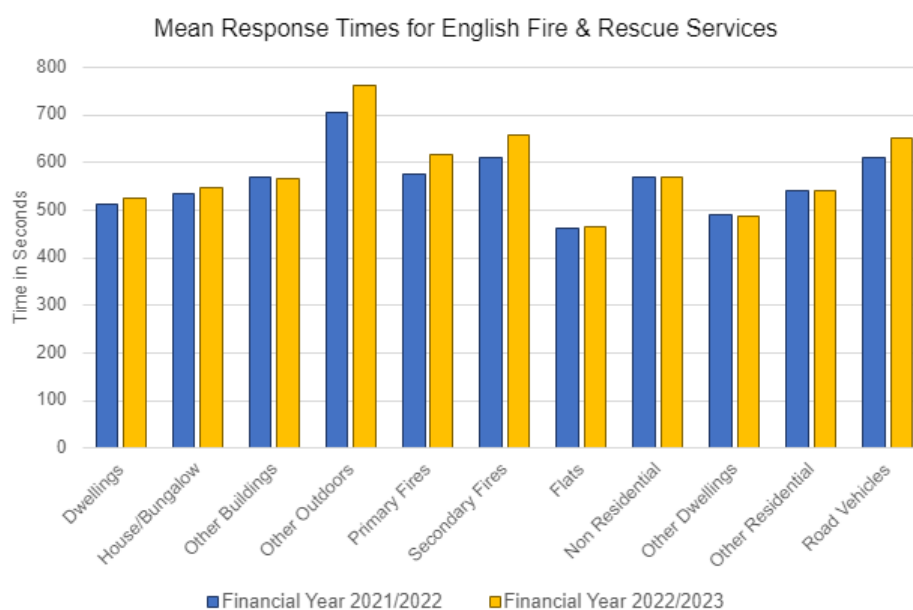


Figure 12

LOCAL INCIDENT STATISTICS

Within Essex County Fire & Rescue Service the total number of incidents decreased during the financial year 2020/2021 due to the societal impacts of COVID-19. As the UK recovers from the initial impacts of COVID-19 societal habits have begun to resume an element of pre-pandemic levels. This in turn led to the increase in incidents in the following financial year, specifically there was a marked increase in special services. Whilst there is no national drive to report on the wide range of incident types collected together within this category the Service does not analyse the data further to understand if any changes could be made to resourcing requirements.

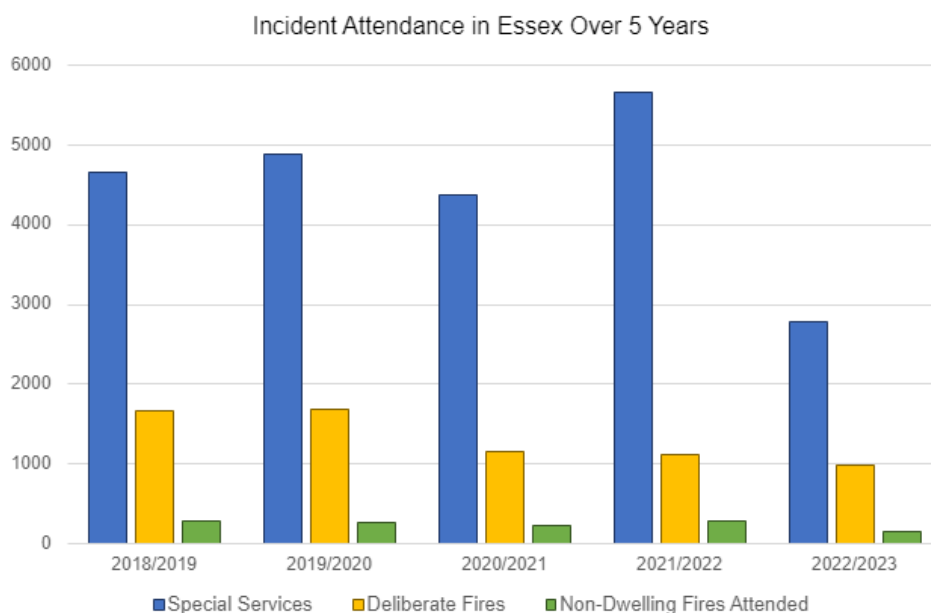


Figure 13

DWELLING FIRES

In contrast to the national mean for dwelling fires over the past two financial years, the Service has attended a higher number of this incident type. The greatest difference is for accidental dwelling fires (Figure 14) whilst Essex is slightly below the average in relation to deliberate dwelling fires. Consideration should also be given the fact that whilst the overall number of dwelling fires in the financial year 2022/2023 was below the English average, the number of accidental dwelling fires was still greater. Further analysis of these figures should identify areas where the Service could do more to prevent accidental dwelling fires from occurring.

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

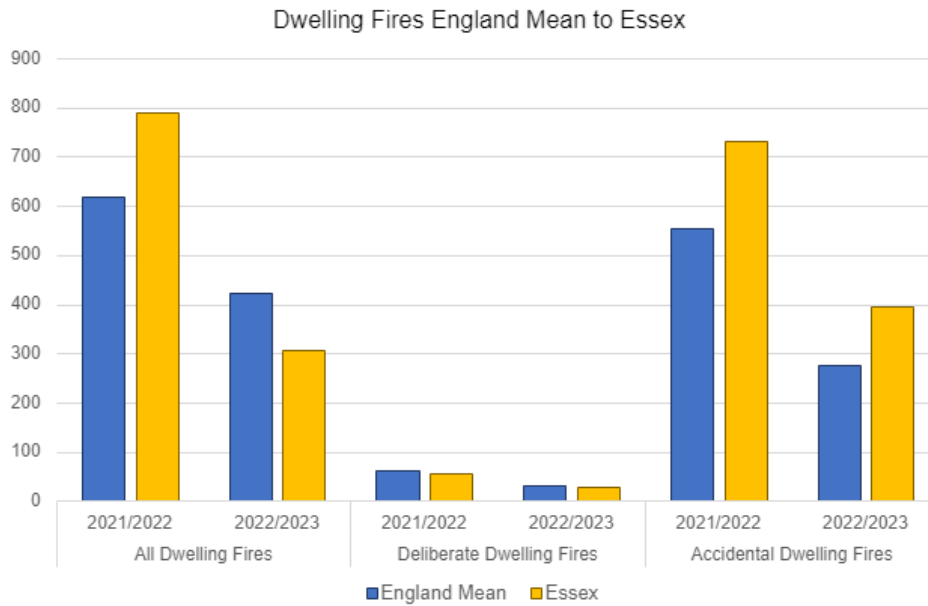


Figure 14

However, whilst the number of accidental dwelling fires in comparison to the English average is not favourable to Essex, the following graph (Figure 15) shows that over the past 5 years the Prevention and Protection work with domestic properties and the people of Essex are having a positive impact. There is a clear trend of a year-on-year reduction in all dwelling fires within Essex.

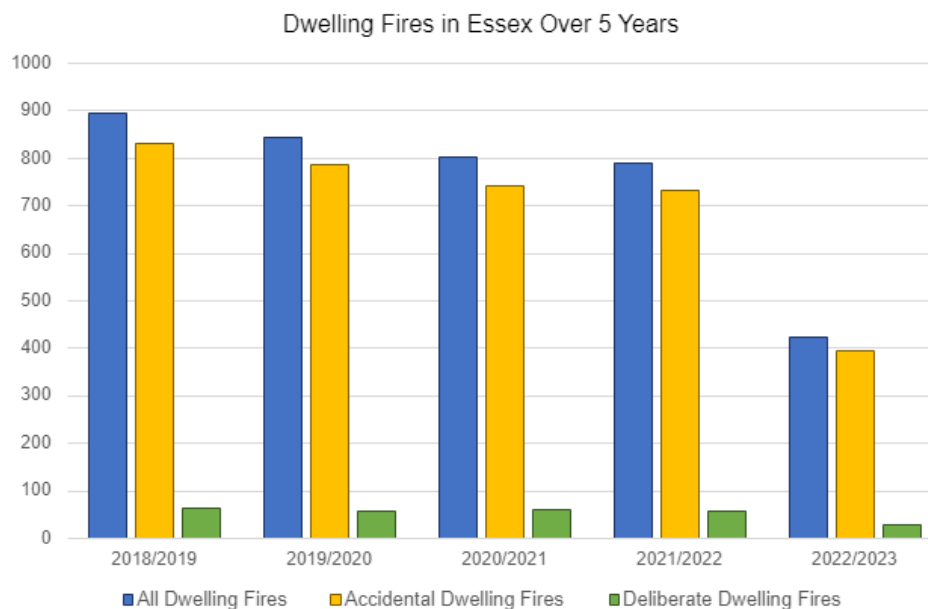


Figure 15

FATAL FIRES

The graphs below (Figures 16 and 17) show the number of fire related fatalities against the English mean and over the past 5 years to occur in Essex. As can be seen in Figure 15 Essex has been below or equivalent to the English average in the last two financial years, however in contrast Essex has had a higher number of accidental dwelling fire fatalities than the English average during this same time period. What this shows is the need for the Service to understand where, when and why these accidental dwelling fire fatalities are occurring and take appropriate measures to engage with the public and responsible persons to work to reduce these.

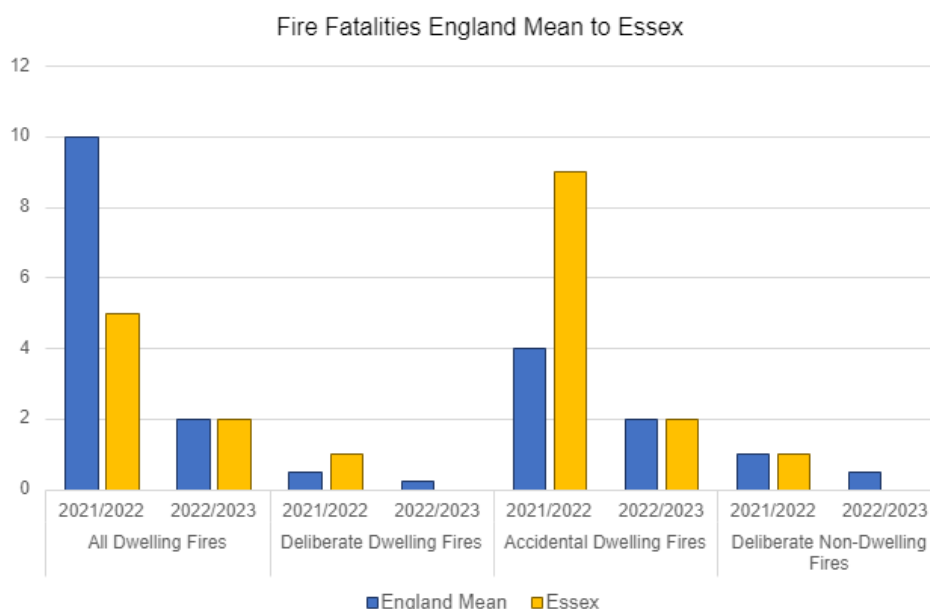


Figure 16

Further analysis of the past 5 years of fatal dwelling fires in Essex shows a steady increase over the years leading up to 2021/2022, with a sudden decrease in 2022/2023 (Figure 11). Whilst the number of deliberate fire fatalities has remained consistently low, further analysis to understand the causes of the accidental dwelling fire fatalities in conjunction with any changes to Service delivery activities, such as Prevention and Protection work, over the past financial year will enable the Service to ensure its resources are being best utilised to address this area of concern.

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

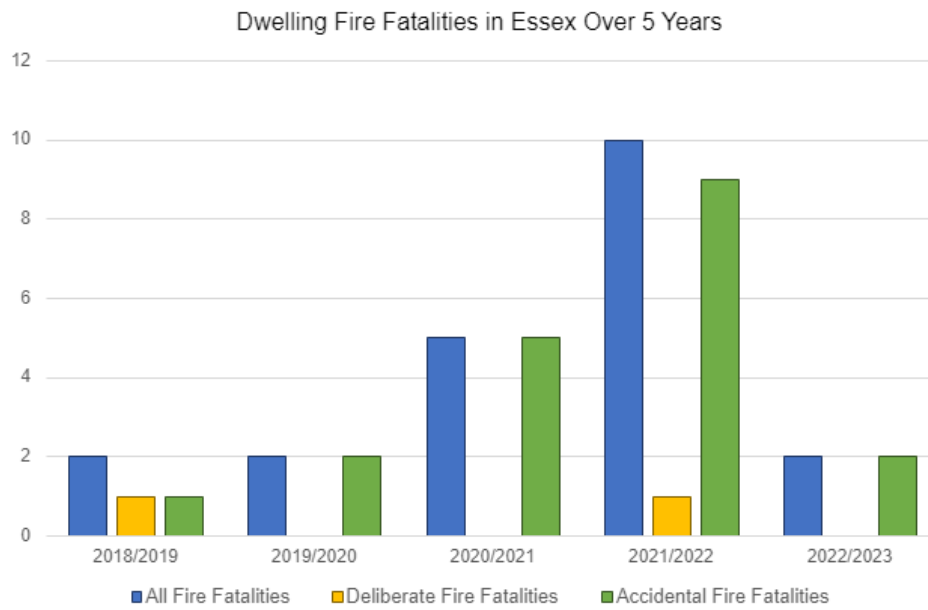


Figure 17

ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISIONS

In contrast to the Service statistics for dwelling fires (see above) the number of road traffic collisions in Essex compared to the English average is significantly higher over the most recent financial years as shown in Figure 18. Looking at this information alongside that represented in Figures 4 and 6, the catch all category of special services attended by fire and rescue services could benefit from further detailed analysis if the Service is going to understand the wider aspects of resource requirements.

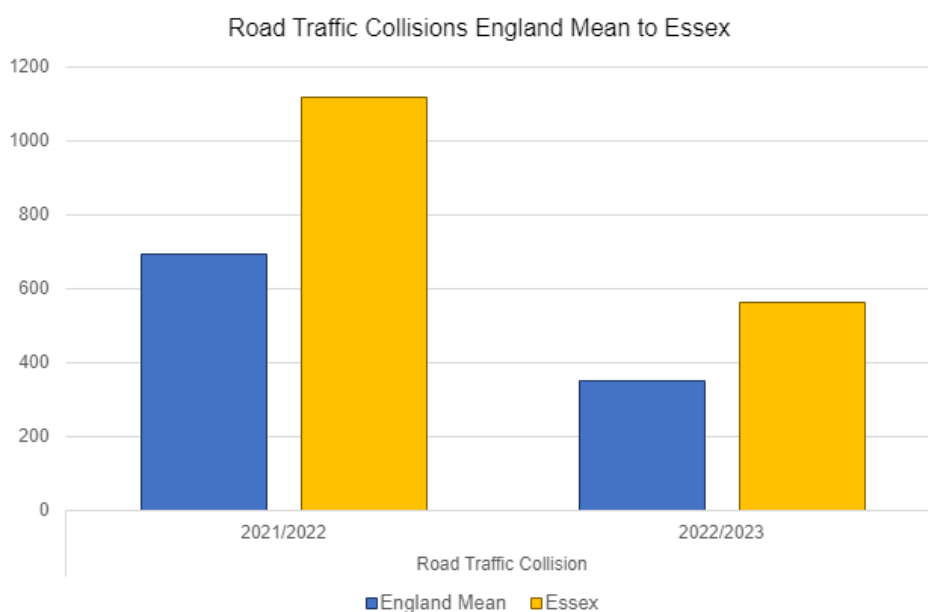


Figure 18

Considering the English mean to Essex data for road traffic collisions alongside the Essex only data across the past 5 years further analysis would benefit to address key road networks which consistently see incidents. The graph below (Figure 19) shows a continuing high trend of road traffic incidents occurring in Essex with an understandable dip in the financial year 2020/2021 as societal behaviours were impacted by the government restrictions imposed to combat COVID-19. However, once these restrictions were lifted the numbers increased back to pre-pandemic levels.

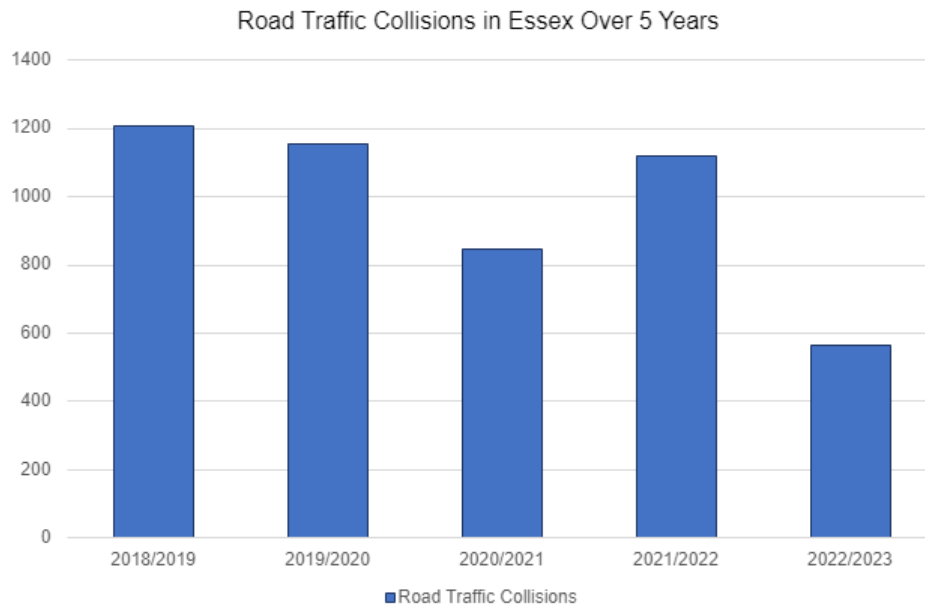


Figure 19

Whilst the data from the financial year 2022/2023 is low, further analysis should be conducted to determine the factors influencing this reduction and what implications this has for the Service, its key priorities within Road Safety and its response model.

WATER RESCUE

The Service maintains Water Rescue capabilities at 5 Stations across the county, at West Mersea, Orsett, Ingatestone, Chelmsford and Billericay. When mobilised these include a Water Rescue First Responder appliance crewed by a minimum of four personnel, a Swift Water Rescue Technician and a Water Incident Manager.

The graph below (Figure 20) shows the total number of water incidents the Service has responded to on a year by year basis since 2017. What this shows is the increasing number of water incidents occurring or requiring the attendance of the Service.

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

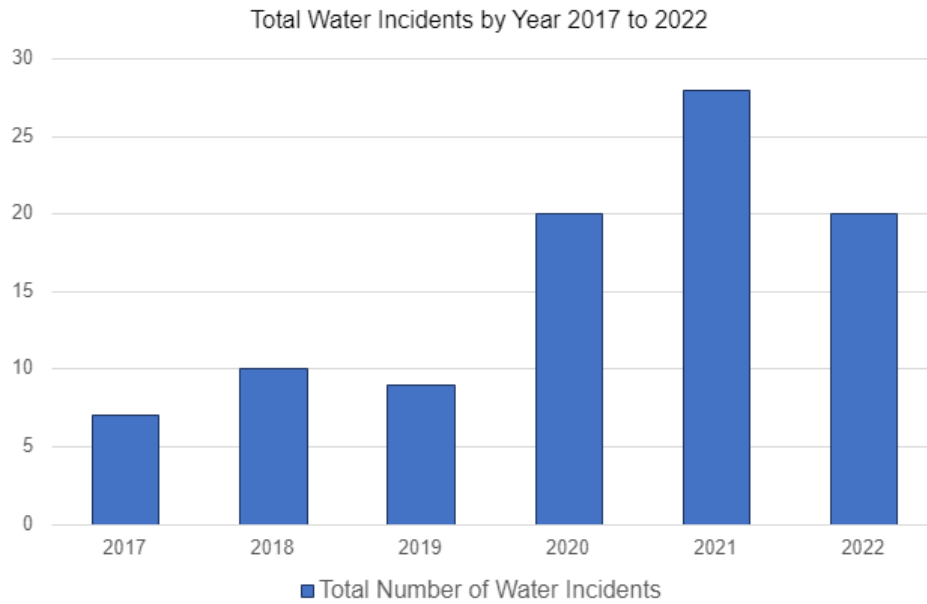


Figure 20

The next graph (Figure 21) shows the break down of water incidents by month, across the 5 year period 2017 to 2022. Whilst some months of the year indicate a lower probability of water incidents occurring, the summer months show a consistent and increasing number of water incidents requiring a Service response.

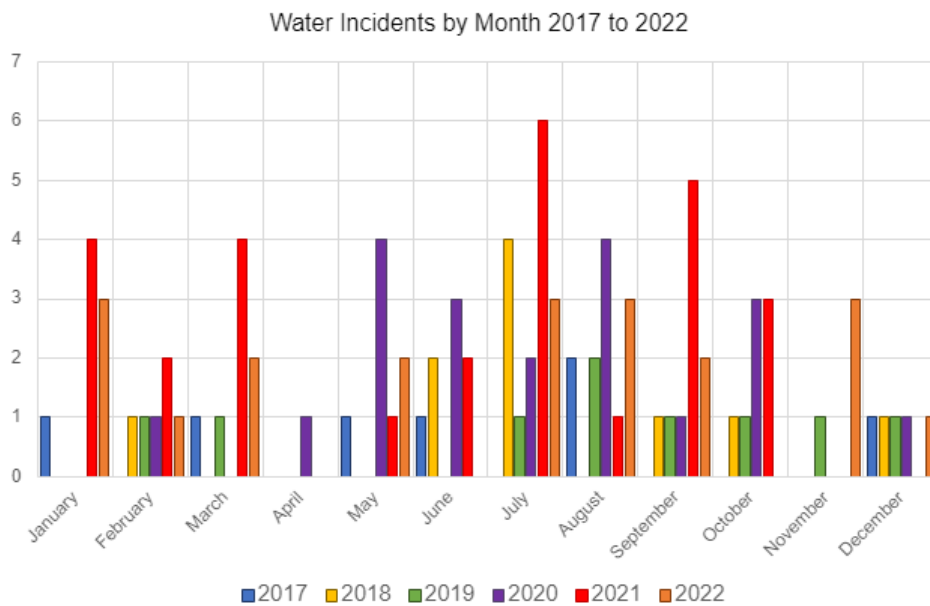


Figure 21

Further analysis is required to understand the type and nature of these water incidents, where they are located geographically and the average duration of a call out. This information will support the appropriate resourcing, training and public engagement to reduce water incidents occurring and effective, efficient responses when required.

CROSS BORDER INCIDENTS

Under Sections 13/16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, Essex County Fire & Rescue Service engages in reciprocal support arrangements with neighbouring Services (see Cross Border Working on page 35 for more details).

With data from the past 3 years, the following graphs show the frequency and amount of cross border incidents Essex has responded to and also requested support for (Figures 22 and 23 respectively).

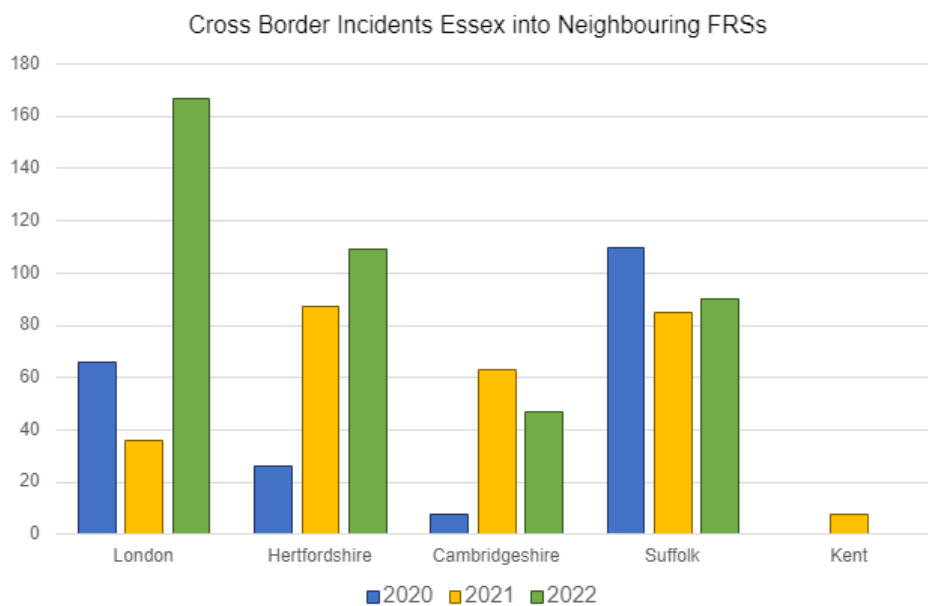


Figure 22

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

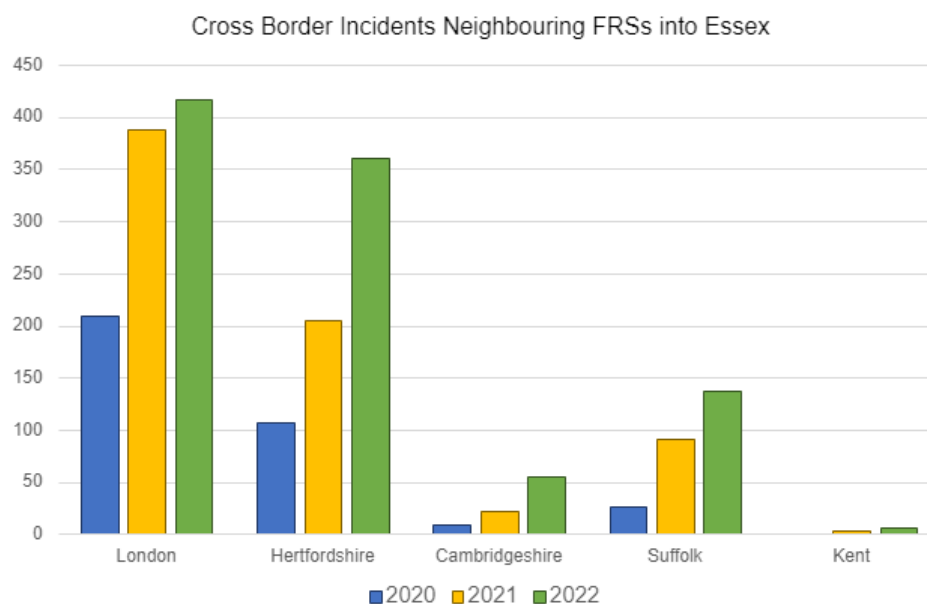


Figure 23

These graphs show an overall trend for support both from Essex to neighbouring fire and rescue services, but also from our neighbouring fire and rescue services into Essex.

The total number of incidents requiring neighbouring fire and rescue services to support Essex in 2022 is 978, which is an increase of 38% on the previous year. As is shown in Figure 17 the increase in requests for support from neighbouring fire and rescue services is part of a continuing trend. Whilst the requests for Essex to respond to cross border incidents does not present such a clear pattern (depicted in Figure 16).

There is clear evidence that Essex requests the support of neighbouring fire and rescue services more frequently than delivering cross border support, predominantly to the West of the county. There is a year on year trend for this with a total of cross border responses of 210 in 2020, 279 in 2021 and 413 in 2022 by Essex, and a total of cross border support of 352 in 2010, 711 in 2021 and 978 in 2022 by neighbouring fire and rescue services.

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

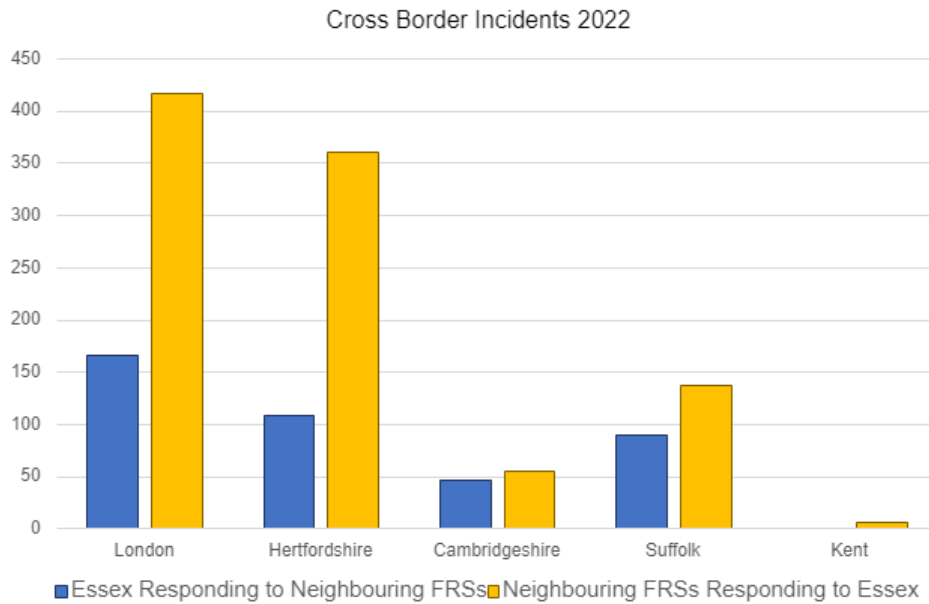


Figure 24

The following two graphs (Figure 25 and 26) show an annual requirement to provide cross border incident support to all of our neighbouring fire and rescue services, with a marked increase during the summer months.

Further analysis could be completed to identify the type and nature of incidents the Service is requested to support and those we request support for to ensure we have appropriate resourcing available to meet the demand. A cost based analysis could be conducted to ascertain which is of greater value for money, increasing the Service resources in areas where cross border support is deployed or continuing to pay for neighbouring fire and rescue services to provide the additional resource.

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

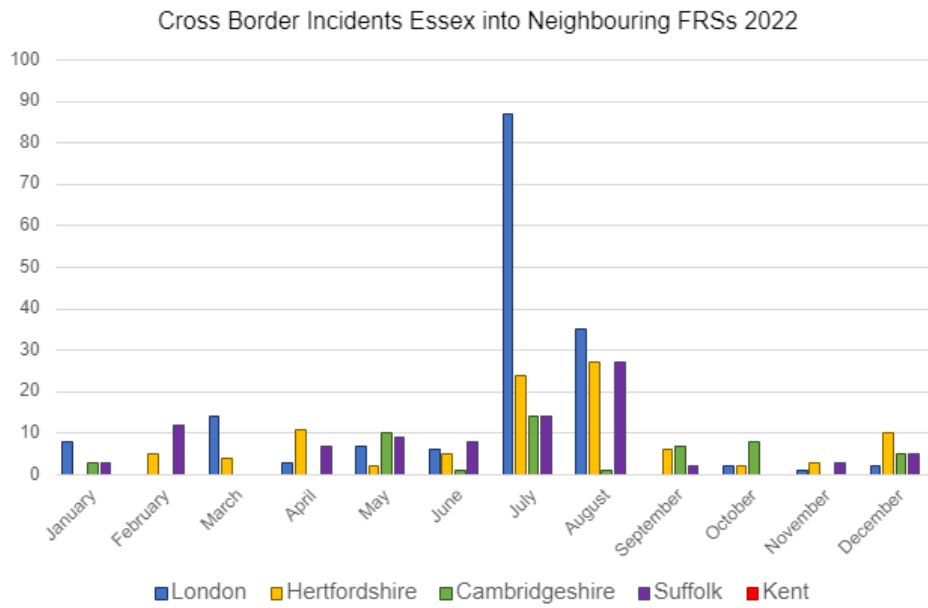


Figure 25

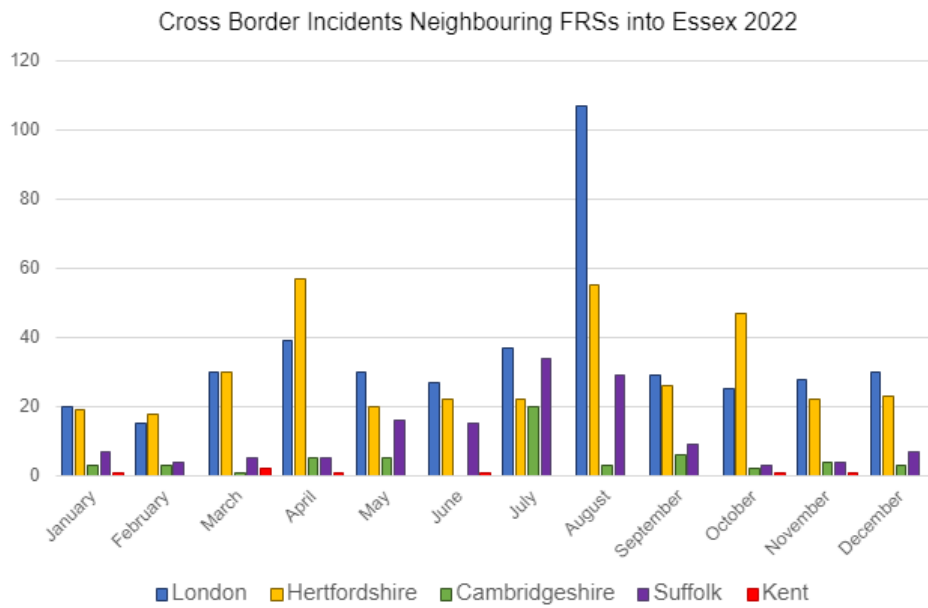


Figure 26

RESPONSE TIMES

The two graphs below (Figures 27 and 28) depict the response times in seconds for Essex over the past 5 years to most incident types. What these show us is that overall, the response times within Essex to most incidents has remained relatively consistent over the past 5 years. However, there are a few areas which show an increase in the past financial year which should be analysed further to understand the contributing factors and what the Service can do to address these where necessary.

For example, the response times to other outdoor incidents shown in Figure 28 for the financial year 2022/2023 is considerably greater than that of the preceding 4 years. Analysis to understand why this has occurred should be undertaken to determine if this is a one year anomaly due to contributing factors, or if this is indicative of future pressures on response times and therefore something to be addressed.

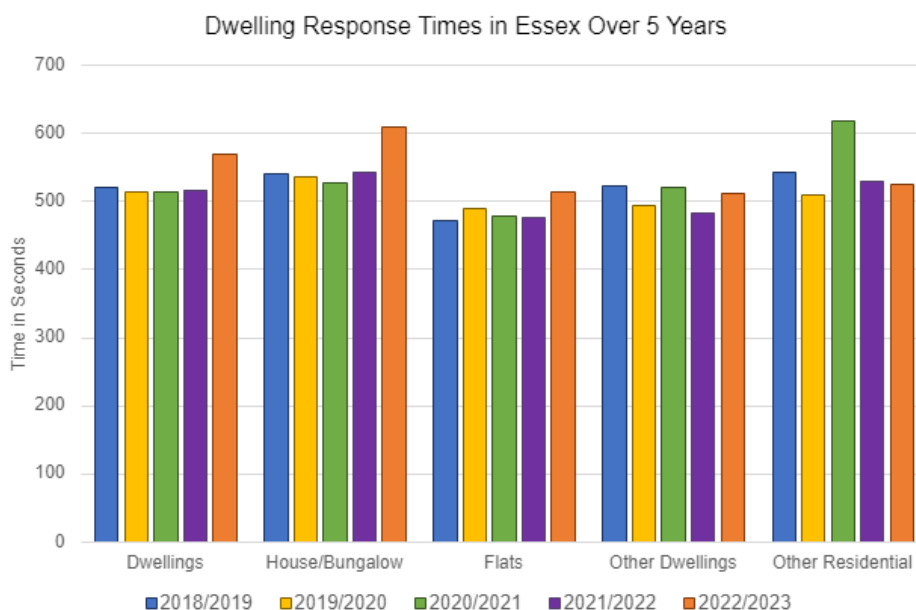


Figure 27

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

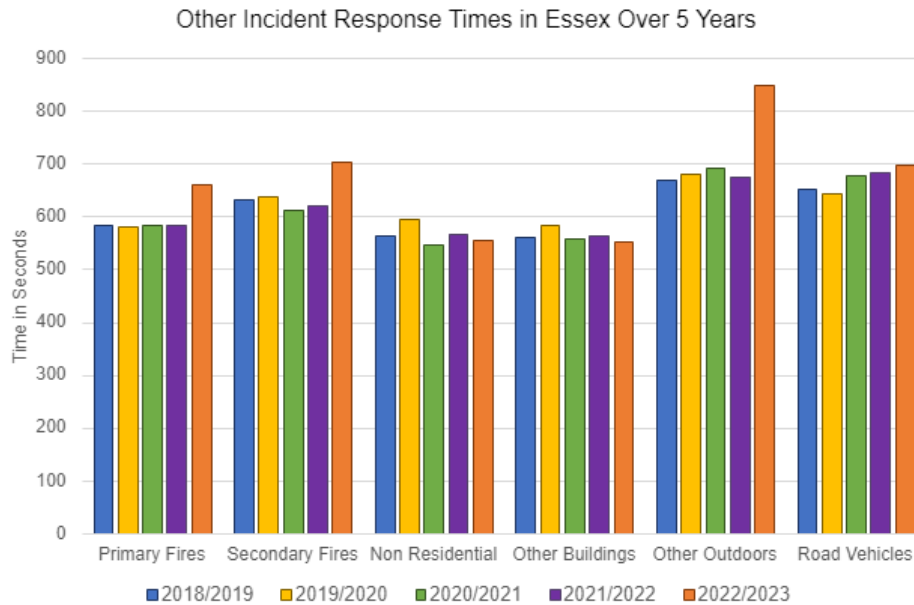


Figure 28

If we take these in comparison with the English mean data depicted in Figure 12, we can see that areas in which Essex is improving upon the English picture is when responding to other residential, non-residential and other buildings incidents, as these are all faster response times than the preceding financial year. Given that the English average for response times has increase across all incident types in the past two financial year consideration should be taken to the societal impacts of COVID-19 on incident data and whether trends will continue back to pre-pandemic levels (as the latest data suggests), or if new ways of working will change the type, nature and frequency of incidents occurring, with the Service having to consider its resourcing accordingly.

PUBLIC INQUIRIES

The Service is proactively engaging with the recommendations from the recent public inquiries into the Grenfell Tower Fire and the Manchester Arena Bombing. These recommendations are being assurance managed by the Collaboration Team to ensure that all partners are engaging at the same level to identify, mitigate and evidence any aspect of their service delivery which requires improvement.

The assurance process created by the Collaboration Team for each agency to follow in reviewing and responding to the recommendations includes the following levels:

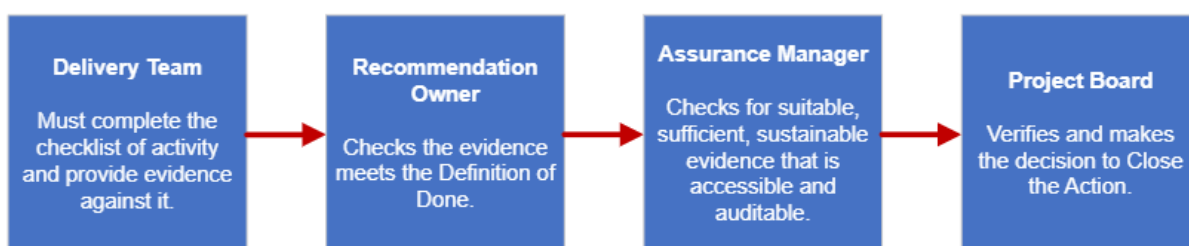


Figure 29

The Project Board provides updates to a number of governance boards to ensure the recommendations are being acted upon effectively and efficiently as shown in the diagram below.

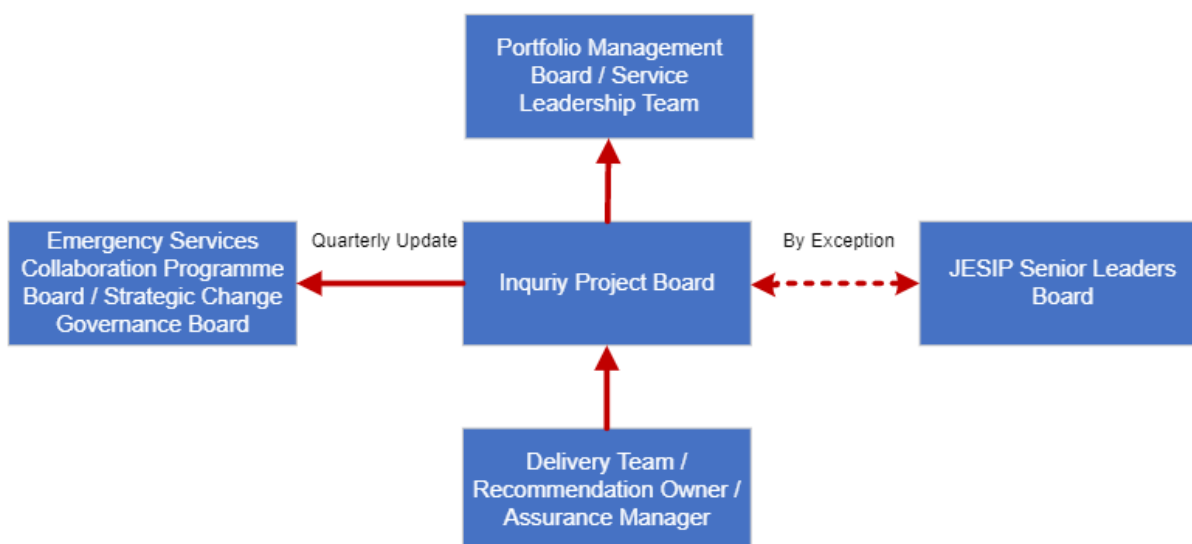


Figure 30

GRENFELL TOWER FIRE

Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry includes 46 recommendations based on 14 areas of interest relevant to Fire and Rescue Services. These are managed within

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

the Service through a robust governance and assurance process using Microsoft Planner.

Steady progress is being made to complete and close each recommendation, providing auditable evidence and solutions which are suitable, sufficient, and sustainable to meet the requirements of the recommendations.

As of February 2023, the status of each recommendation falls within the following categories:

- Open, Not Progressing – 0
 - The action is open, but requires performance managing to progress, has other blockers or is awaiting national guidance / legislation.
- Open, Progressing – 19
 - The action is still open, and is progressing within scope, quality and stated timeframes.
- Closed, Awaiting Assurance – 12
 - Levels 1 and 2 of the Assurance Framework have been completed and the action is with Operational Assurance for Level 3 Assurance.
- Closed, Assured – 15
 - Operational Assurance have confirmed there is suitable and sufficient accessible evidence that the action has been completed to the required standard within the Assurance Framework and meets the original requirements. The Project Board have verified this and made the decision to close the action.

In addition to the recommendations, the National Fire Chief's Council also issued 37 questions for individual Fire and Rescue Service's to respond to in relation to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. The Service is managing the response to these questions through the same assurance process as the recommendation actions.

As of February 2023, the status of each question falls within the following categories:

- Open, Progressing – 14
- Closed and Evidenced – 23

MANCHESTER ARENA BOMBING

Following the publication of the Manchester Arena Inquiry Volume 2 in November 2022 the Collaboration Team reviewed the 149 recommendations and created a duplicate assurance process to the Grenfell Tower action tracker which has been

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

cascaded to all partners for actioning. In relation to the recommendations assigned to the Service:

As of February 2023, the status of each recommendation is:

- National Fire – 2
 - These will be managed through the full assurance process.
- Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service – 4
 - A gap analysis and impact assessment has been undertaken – any gaps identified will be managed through the full assurance process.
- North West Fire Control – 8
 - A gap analysis and impact assessment has been undertaken – any gaps identified will be managed through the full assurance process.
- There are also 27 recommendations which are multi-agency and need to be considered by the Service.
- All Other Recommendations
 - These will be overviewed by the governance process to ensure consistency of delivery for Essex communities.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

ESSEX RESILIENCE FORUM

The Essex Resilience Forum is a multi-agency group of Category 1 and 2 responders that oversees the resilience of Essex should a significant event occur of which Essex County Fire & Rescue Service is an active and integral partner.

The Essex Resilience Forum has a dedicated team of four staff, with partners from all agencies supporting in each of the boards and working groups set up to plan, prepare and respond to multi-agency incidents.

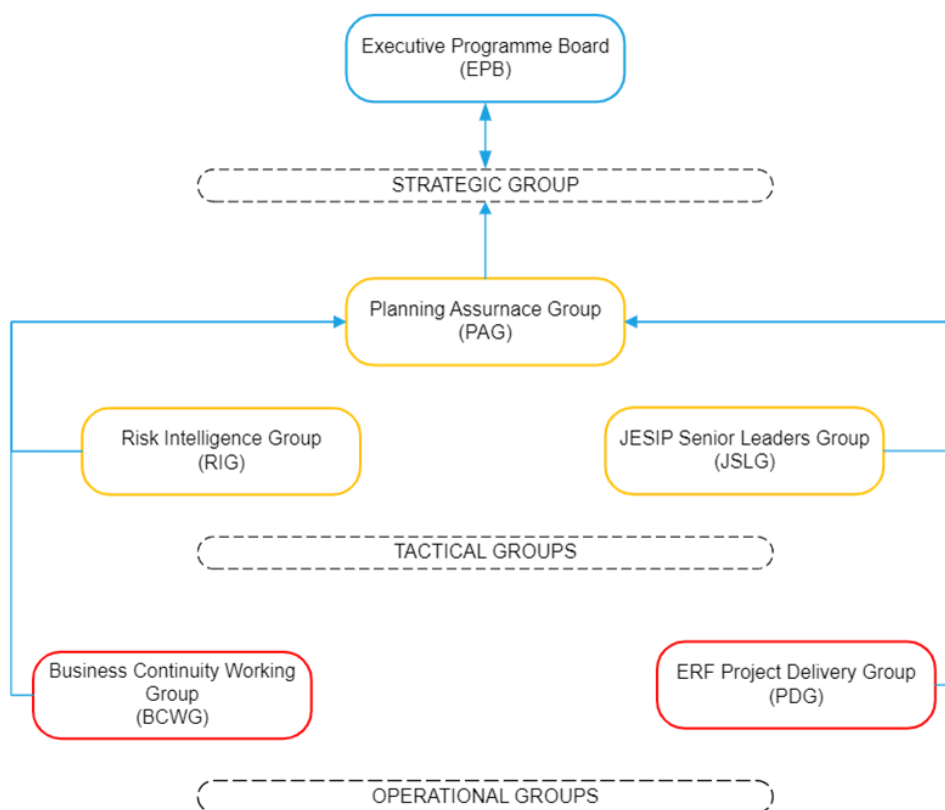


Figure 31

As detailed in Figure 31 above, the Essex Resilience Forum governance model comprises of one board and two overarching groups. The Executive Programme Board, which is Chaired by the Chief Constable oversees the work of the Essex Resilience Forum as delivered through the two working groups. These groups are responsible for ensuring all risks are identified, assessed and appropriately mitigated.

The Planning Assurance Group focuses on the capability and capacity of partner agencies, ensuring plans are maintained and exercises regularly conducted in

relation to the risk identification process completed through the Risk Intelligence Group.

The Risk Intelligence Group compiles the Community Risk Register, utilising the National Risk Register as its source and assessing these in relation to the local makeup of Essex, Thurrock, and Southend. These risks are then assessed and fed into the Planning Assurance Group for them to action.

The Essex Resilience Forum has an overarching framework for ensuring effective and efficient collaborative working is maintained when responding to and recovering from multi-agency incidents. This is the Combined Operating Procedures for Essex.

EMERGENCY SERVICES COLLABORATION

The Service formalised its arrangement with Essex Police to work in collaboration in 2016 based on the shared coterminous boundaries and government direction to manage down demand on services whilst protecting those most vulnerable from harm. The engagement of the Collaboration Team also extends to other partners whom joint working delivers beneficial outcomes to all, most notably with East of England Ambulance Service.

Working in partnership has been shown to deliver benefits including:

- Better outcomes for the communities who use our services.
- Increased resilience.
- Sharing of best practice.
- Reduced costs through removal of duplication.

All areas of Service delivery are considered for potential collaborative activity against the following aims:

- Community Focussed
 - To deliver safe, effective and efficient public services which will make our communities safer, stronger and more resilient.
- Improved Outcomes
 - The collaboration maintains or improves the service we provide to local people and local communities.
- Reduced Demand
 - The collaboration should contribute towards our longer term strategic objective of decreasing risk in communities and reducing demand on public services.
- Better Value for Money

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

- The collaboration produces quantifiable efficiencies either on implementation or in the longer term.

Governance on the projects delivered through the collaborative route is provided through:

- Strategic Board
 - To provide unified direction and effective decision making, providing resources and authorising funding.
- Programme Board
 - To provide overall direction and accountability, day-to-day management.
- Programme Team
 - Responsible for the delivery of products, evaluation of benefit and delegation of work streams as appropriate.
- Quality Assurance
 - Independent of the Programme Board to act as support and a critical friend.

CROSS BORDER WORKING

The Service has long standing arrangements in place with its neighbouring Services which are detailed under Sections 13/16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

Section 13 obliges Fire and Rescue Authorities to group together, so far as practicable, to provide mutual assistance for fires, road traffic collisions and other serious emergencies.

Section 16 extends powers to Fire and Rescue Authorities to enter contractual arrangements with others (including other Fire and Rescue Authorities) to provide services in the execution of their functions.

The Operational and Community Risk team lead the Service engagement with our neighbouring Services to build and maintain strong working relationships with whom we share risk information relative to the cross border area.

Our neighbouring Services include London Fire Brigade, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service and Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services share risk information relative to their cross border areas and engage with the Service in regular cross border exercising both at the local station level and at strategic, multi-agency levels addressing identified risks.

NATIONAL AND JOINT OPERATIONAL LEARNING

Joint Operational Learning and National Operational Learning are managed by the National Fire Chief's Council which is made up of a Secretariat and National Operational Learning User Group.

The Secretariat review learning submissions from fire and rescue services for National Operational Learning and from multi agency services for Joint Operational Learning. The submissions are reviewed against current National Operational Guidance to determine if any changes to the guidance is required.

Where a fire and rescue service provides evidence that the use of Operational Discretion was a valid decision and they worked outside of national guidance, the Secretariat will consider if there is a need to revise the guidance to accommodate the identified need.

Multi agency learning is published as a Joint Operational Learning Notable Practice or Lesson Identified and identifies the scenario of lessons learnt and the service to which the learning is applicable. Notable Practices are circulated to all partners as they provide best practice guidance whereas Lessons Identified are only circulated to those services which they relate to. Lessons Identified can be accompanied by an action plan and requirement to confirm implementation back to the National Fire Chief's Council.

The Service has embedded Joint Operational Learning and National Operational Learning into its Operational Assurance and Debrief processes to ensure that lessons learned outside of Essex County Fire & Rescue Service are duly considered and incorporated into future improvements. The Service also shares any local operational learning with other services through these processes.

Submissions made to the Joint Operational Learning portal are monitored and reported into the Operational Assurance Group to advise on any activity taken as a result. All activity captured in a register and shared with our Category 1 partners in Essex Police and East of England Ambulance Trust.

National Operational Learning is received as Action Notes which provide recommendations for improvement and Information Notes which are for awareness only. The Information Notes and Action Notes are circulated to Operational personnel and appropriate departments within the Service for relevant action with responses collated and captured in a register.

ENGAGEMENT WITH REPRESENTATIVE BODIES

The Service holds regular sessions with each of the four unions recognised (see Chapter 2 – Political Risk for more detail).

The Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee meets bi-monthly and is a forum to register and conclude matters for negotiation and consultation and to establish any joint task and finish groups to consider such matters. The Service held its first combined Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee with the Fire and Rescue Services Association, Fire Officers Association and UNISON on the 17th October 2022 and the second on the 5th December 2022. Feedback from the recognised trade union bodies has been positive. This approach and a joint SharePoint site for joint consultation has continued to bring improvements in the Working Well Together approach. We continue to have a separate Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee meeting for the Fire Brigade Union.

Our current Working Well Together approach was created as the output of workshops that we held with each of the joint representative bodies. It complements our formal mechanism – the Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee. The schedule of consultation involves seeking acceptable solutions to problems through a genuine exchange of views and information.

The approach is based on a shared understanding of priorities and different perspectives, agreement on amendments to plans if needed / appropriate. There is a

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

6-weekly timetable of priority areas and an agreed format for engagement, consultation, and negotiation.

A SharePoint site enables all Trade Union Bodies to view in real time feedback provided by others and the responses to those. This approach facilitates a more collaborative approach.

At the end of a consultation phase the trade unions are asked whether they:

1. Agree,
2. Reserve the position, or
3. Fail to Agree.

Of the failures to agree we have resolved all but one internally, we referred one matter for external assistance from the National Joint Council Joint Secretaries.

The identified common objectives to be pursued and achieved through this are:

- To ensure that employment practices in the Service are conducted in accord with Service Policy;
- To enhance effective communication;
- To achieve greater participation and involvement on the issues to be faced in running and developing the Service;
- To ensure that equal opportunities are offered to staff, or prospective staff and that the treatment of staff will be fair and equitable in all matters of dispute;
- Ensure good employee relations.

STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The Service proactively engages with our public through the use of social and traditional media channels. We use our social media accounts to follow partners, stakeholders and other relevant accounts of interest. This allows us to see content that we may like to share, we also tag in accounts where possible when we mention them in our own content.

The Service continues to evolve and develop its use of digital and online communications in response to the changing nature of public interaction with media sources. Information shared online and through mobile devices supports the responsive and timely reputation of our Service. It enables us to communicate with a wide range of audiences through a mix of digital platforms.

Our social media objectives are:

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

1. Build an engaged audience.
 - a. To grow Essex County Fire & Rescue Service social media audience, respond to their comments and engage positively in digital conversations with them.
2. Inform and educate our public.
 - a. To encourage behaviour change that is driven by our Service priorities.
3. Build trust in our brand.
 - a. Strengthening relationships and perception, sharing knowledge and expertise.

The Corporate Communications and Marketing Team lead the Service in shaping and responding to online media comments and conversations. They provide full training and guidance for all Service social media users, maintaining account access and removing admin users once they have left the Service. Authorisation details for social media accounts are linked to either shared mailboxes or an individual admin users work mobile which can create a risk when that individual is not available.

Key priorities for our social media conversations include:

- Providing important safety information, including fire prevention.
- Promoting the work we do as an organisation.
- Enabling closer community engagement.
- Reporting on incidents of note.
- Utilising the National Fire Chief's Council calendar to set our monthly priority messages to help educate our public around staying safe.
- Warning and informing of national stories to enable our public to prepare and make themselves safer.

We send press releases out through our GovDelivery e-newsletter platform which is a trusted source of information for journalists. The Service provides an On Call Press Officer role which operates 24/7 with a dedicated phone number through which our partners, stakeholders and employees are able to access a member of the Corporate Communications and Marketing Team. This enables the team to provide consistent, effective and efficient communication channels with the media.

The Service monitors all media coverage as this is a strong influencer on public opinion of the work of Essex County Fire & Rescue Service. Negative media coverage or social media comments and conversations can shape public perception of the Service and the team must be proactive in responding appropriately to all media stories.

MONITORING PERFORMANCE

HMICFRS INSPECTION OUTCOMES

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) independently assesses the effectiveness and efficiency of police forces and fire and rescue services.

Following the six-week inspection of our Service in late 2021 by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) they have published their report on their findings.

Within this report we have been rated as 'Requires Improvement' in each of the three areas – People, Professionalism and Efficiency.

Areas of improvement that have been identified include:

- We are not aligning resources to risk, including meeting its prevention and protections strategies.
- We need to address future financial challenges and appropriate use of our resources.
- Workforce productivity needs to increase.
- We need to do more to meet our response standards.
- We need to implement National Operational Guidance.
- More work is needed to understand and address equality issues, including disproportionality in recruitment and retention.
- We need to work even harder to drive out all unacceptable behaviour and tackle bullying and harassment.
- More assurances are needed that our people are trained well enough to carry out their responsibilities.

Areas of success that were highlighted include:

- Our culture is continuing to improve.
- We promote mental and physical health and wellbeing well.
- We are good at evaluating operational performance.
- We are good at communicating incident-related information to the public.
- We use national learning and are an active member of the Essex Resilience Forum.
- We are now 'good' at understanding risk, with an effective IRMP, good gathering and communication of the highest risks.
- Our focus on those most at risk is improving.

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

- Our response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry to reduce risk and our work to assess the risk of each high-rise building in our area is good.
- The quality of fire safety audits is at ‘a high standard’.
- Our Safe and Well visits by our Prevention team are skilled and confident.
- We have a good number of incident commanders, and they understand how to command incidents safely.
- Colleagues understand and have confidence in health and safety policies.

FIRE STANDARDS

The Fire Standards Board has been established to oversee the identification, organisation, development and maintenance of professional Standards for fire and rescue services in England. In establishing the published Fire Standards, the Board considers the developing fire and rescue landscape informed by outcomes and recommendations made as a result of:

- Inspections or inquiries;
- The Fire Reform programme;
- The findings from or impacts of research;
- Operational or organisational learning from past incidents;
- Legislation.

Essex County Fire & Rescue Service is fully committed to contributing to the development of the Standards, providing feedback through consultation periods, and adopting the Standards to support a process of continuous improvement.

The process flow below outlines how the Service engages with and implements a newly released Fire Standard.

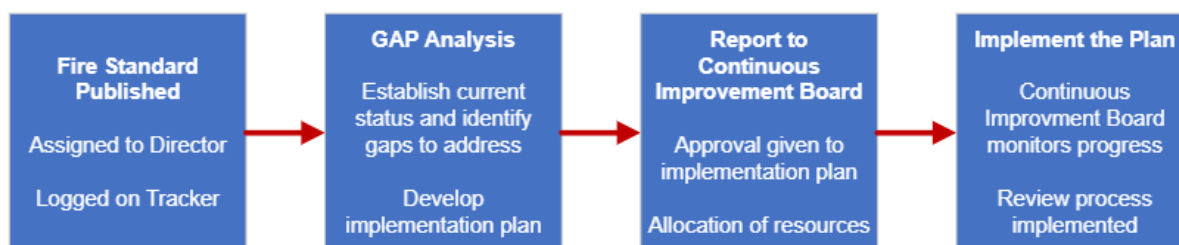


Figure 32

As of January 2023, the Service had achieved partial compliance against each of the published Fire Standards as detailed in the table below (Table 2). The implementation plans associated with each Fire Standard have now been approved

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

for progression with the Continuous Improvement Board monitoring the progress towards compliance over the coming year.

Fire Standard	Publication Date	Initial Assessment of Compliance
Safeguarding	15.02.2021	90%
Emergency Response Driving	16.02.2021	95%
Operational Competence	16.02.2021	38%
Operational Learning	16.02.2021	In Progress
Operational Preparedness	16.02.2021	77%
Code of Ethics	18.05.2021	61%
Community Risk Management Planning	18.05.2021	68%
Prevention	30.07.2021	68%
Protection	30.07.2021	55%
Fire Investigation	31.03.2022	20%
Emergency Planning and Resilience	31.05.2022	91%
Data Requirements and Management	02.08.2022	79%

Table 2

To support in the delivery of the Fire Standards the Service's National Fire Chief's Council Implementation Manager will facilitate focus sessions on each of the Standards for the responsible manager to attend, to learn from best practice, get specific advice and guidance, and for the National Fire Chief's Council to share improvement tools relevant to each standard.

FIT FOR THE FUTURE

Fit for the Future establishes a common picture for the future of fire and rescue services in England. Its purpose is to identify what needs to change, using a sound evidence base and then identify how that change could be delivered at local and national levels, supporting its implementation across all services.

Wide engagement has taken place on the concept and content of Fit for the Future to ensure it reflects the views of senior managers and political leaders. There are a

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

number of key areas of work and oversight that will be informed by Fit for the Future, these include:

- Production of central guidance, doctrine and tools.
- Audit and inspection.
- Pay and conditions for employees.
- Standards development.

The evidence considered within Fit for the Future identified 12 improvement objectives, which have been divided into three themes:

- Theme One: Service Delivery – the role of the Fire and Rescue Service.
 1. Community Risk Management Plan
 2. Prevention
 3. Protection
 4. Evaluation
- Theme Two: Leadership, People, and Culture.
 1. Competence
 2. Attracting Employees
 3. Retaining Employees
 4. Inspirational and Inclusive Leadership
- Theme Three: National Infrastructure and Support.
 1. Creating National Implementation Support
 2. Collaboration
 3. Data and Digital Support
 4. Organisational Learning

For each improvement objective a lead responsible owner has been identified who has provided a position statement, a gap analysis and identified key actions required to address any areas requiring improvement. The Service is still evaluating the most appropriate methodology for measuring the successful completion of each action before assigning them to a responsible owner and beginning an assurance process to review each action and its supporting evidence.

INTERNAL AUDITS

The Service employs an external company, RSM UK Group LLP, to deliver its Internal Audit Services. The Internal Auditor has a responsibility to review and report to the independent Audit Committee annually, to provide assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner's arrangements for governance, risk management and control.

Strategic Assessment of Risk – Organisational Risk

The Internal Audit Programme uses a risk-based approach to provide assurance to the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner on Service delivery which are categorised under the following levels of assurance in their reports:

- Substantial Assurance
 - The organisation has an adequate and effective framework for risk, governance, and internal control.
- Reasonable Assurance
 - The organisation has an adequate and effective framework for risk, governance, and internal control, however work indicated further enhancements are required.
- Partial Assurance
 - There are weaknesses in the framework of governance, risk management and control such that it could become inadequate or ineffective.
- Minimal Assurance
 - The organisation does not have an adequate framework of risk management, governance, or internal control.

REFERENCES

Continuous Improvement Board Exception Report January 2023

[Fit for the Future 2022 | NFCC CPO \(ukfrs.com\)](https://www.ukfrs.com)

[Fire statistics data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

<https://www.firestandards.org/>

SLT Report_Fire Standards