



East Sussex Fire Authority

Statement of Operational Assurance 2020/21

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1. Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

- 1.1 The core functions of the Fire Authority are set down in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (“the Act”) which requires the promotion of fire safety; preparation for fire-fighting; protecting people and property from fires; rescuing people from road traffic collisions; and dealing with other emergencies such as flooding or terrorist attack. Further details can be viewed by following the link below:

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/21/pdfs/ukpga_20040021_en.pdf

1.2 How we are assured

- 1.2.1 East Sussex Combined Fire Authority is the statutory body for discharging the requirements of the FRS Act across the County of East Sussex and City of Brighton and Hove.

- 1.2.1 The provisions made under Sections 7, 8 and 9 are outlined in detail within our Integrated Fire Risk Management Plan 2020-2025 (IRMP) found at the following link:

https://www.esfrs.org/_resources/assets/attachment/full/0/33809.pdf

- 1.2.3 This document describes how detailed analysis of past history, present activity and future demand continue outlines the people, places and equipment required to mitigate the fire and rescue related risks in our area. This has resulted in a fit for purpose Service to the Community covering all aspects of Fire Prevention, Fire Protection and emergency response.

1.3 National Framework 2018

- 1.3.1 Section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act requires a fire and rescue authority to have regard to the National Fire and Rescue Framework, produced by the Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service, when carrying out its functions. The revised Framework issued in May 2018 states that every FRS must:

- Identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face
- Make appropriate provision for fire prevention and protection activities and response to fire and rescue incidents
- 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

A copy of the full Framework Document can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-and-rescue-national-framework-for-england--2>

- 1.3.2 The Fire and Rescue Services Act (S21) gives statutory force to the National Framework thereby requiring every FRS to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

1.4 How we are assured:

1.4.1 To ensure our IRMP is fit for purpose reflecting the inherent and anticipated fire and rescue related risks, we completed an Operational Response Review (ORR).

1.4.2 Using the attendance standards agreed by the Fire Authority in 2018, this process enabled us to demonstrate that to mitigate the fire and rescue related risks requires 24 Fire Stations with the 18 immediate and 6 resilience frontline fire appliances available before demand or at the start of each day. Our attendance standards are:

- The 1st fire appliance with an “on-station” response of 10 minutes 70% of the time
- The attendance standard for the 1st fire appliance with an ‘on-call’ response of 15 minutes 70% of the time

The ORR Main report can be viewed using the following link here:

https://www.esfrs.org/_resources/assets/attachment/full/0/33792.pdf

1.4.3 The ORR afforded us the opportunity to complete a comprehensive local analysis of the risk for each of the 24 existing Fire Stations in our area captured in individual Station Risk Profiles. Local managers use these to tailor our risk reduction activities. This data-led analysis was carried out using F-SEC, MOSAIC etc. and has been used to demonstrate how the provisions we are making mitigate the actual and anticipated fire and rescue related risks.

The 24 Station Risk Profiles can be viewed using the following link here:

<https://www.esfrs.org/safer-future/>

1.4.4 We can say with confidence that our IRMP takes full cognisance of the geography, demography, transport networks and built and natural environment enabling us to provide suitable resources capable of dealing with all inherent and predictable fire and rescue related risks. In essence, this process enables us to effectively plan our resource allocation against our identified risk profile. A copy of the current IRMP can be accessed by following this link:

https://www.esfrs.org/_resources/assets/attachment/full/0/33809.pdf

1.4.5 An IRMP Strategic and Delivery Board have been convened to oversee the Implementation of the 2021 – 2025 IRMP which report into the Fire Authority Scrutiny and Audit Panel. A detailed set of 8 workstreams themed around the main areas of the IRMP is being systematically planned for delivery within 29 individual workpackages.

As these develop, future Statements of Assurance will signpost progress via the minutes from the Scrutiny and Audit Panel meetings.

1.5 IRMP Methodology

1.5.1 A team from Nottingham Trent University were commissioned to undertake research into IRMP methodology by the National Fire Chiefs Council. The team reviewed how we undertook our Operational Response Review which ultimately populated our IRMP 2020 – 2025 and the methodology was held in high regard and identified as an example of good practice. Their report was published in August 2019 and can be found using the following link:

http://irep.ntu.ac.uk/id/eprint/36059/1/13495_Murphy.pdf

1.6 National Framework Report:

- 1.6.1 Section 25 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires the Secretary of State to lay a report before Parliament every two years on the extent to which all fire and rescue authorities are acting in accordance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

1.7 How we are assured:

- 1.7.1 This Annual Statement of Assurance lays out how East Sussex Fire Authority comply with the legal framework as laid out above and forms the return to the Home Office for government's consideration

2. PREVENTION

- 2.1 (Fire and Rescue Services Act Section 6):
A fire and rescue authority must make provision for the purpose of promoting fire safety in its area. In making provision a fire and rescue authority must in particular, to the extent that it considers it reasonable to do so, make arrangements for;
- a) The provision of information, publicity and encouragement in respect of the steps to be taken to prevent fires and death or injury by fire;
 - b) The giving of advice, on request, about
 - i. How to prevent fires and restrict their spread in buildings and other property;
 - ii. The means of escape from buildings and other property in case of fire.

2.2 How we are assured:

2.3 Thematic Plans

- 2.3.1 Our community safety activities focus on a range of **thematic plans**, comprehensive action plans detailing the activities that will be delivered across the Service area to reduce the risk associated with the following topics. Our Initiatives Library contains physical, documentary and communications resources targeting each area of community risk has been designed to support the delivery of prevention activities by operational crews. Development and maintenance of the thematic plans and initiatives library resources are the responsibility of the Group Partnership & Engagement Business Partners:

1. **Home/Fire:** Safety in the home and wider environment
2. **Road safety:** Giving particular attention to the number of people killed or seriously injured. We educate the community about the principles of the fatal four during “Safe drive, stay alive” events. To continue this good work during the pandemic, these have been delivered virtually, making full use of audio-visual platforms
3. **Water safety and drowning prevention:** These activities centre around our “Water savvy, water safe” known as “WS²” water safety educational programme
4. **Incident reduction:** Including the reduction of malicious and deliberate fire related incidents
5. **Education:**
 - a) **Wellbeing:** Educational interventions with children and young people, initiatives include safety in action and Firewise
 - b) **Watch scheme:** A programme of activity based within fire stations for young people on the cusp of exclusion from schools or involved in anti-social behaviour
 - c) **Safety in Action:** Our gold award winning practical based interactive sessions that encourage Year 6 children to recognise hazards and take action to keep themselves and others safe.
 - d) **Safeguarding:** Ensuring that our statutory obligations are met. Safeguarding referrals include areas such as hoarding
 - e) **Fire Cadet schemes:** We have recently introduced two schemes one in the north, one in the south of the County for young adults between 13 – 17 helping develop safety and life skills, team-building activities and a “Get active” fit and healthy programme
 - f) **Volunteers:** We have a vibrant and growing volunteer network working for our Community Safety Team who make a huge contribution to the wide range of activities including advice and education.

- 2.3.2 We continue to work with partners to improve people’s access to health and support services and tailor these activities toward the most vulnerable within our communities

- 2.3.3 ESFRS have a strong commitment to support all prevention activity and public engagement making full use of our community volunteer section.
- 2.3.4 ESFRS works collaboratively with all partners to develop child home safety advice and children's equipment such as car seats and stair gates. The service has links with a wide cross-section of statutory agencies, third sector organisations and services to ensure we are fully integrated within our community.

2.4 Community Volunteers

- 2.4.1 ESFRS started its community volunteer scheme in 2009 and currently has 80 volunteers from across the service area. Management of the scheme is undertaken by Coordinators working within the central Community Safety team.

Our key community volunteering priorities are:

- To ensure volunteering is an integral part of ESFRS and that volunteer activities contribute to ESFRS reaching more members of the community and making East Sussex and Brighton & Hove a safer place.
- To ensure volunteering is a worthwhile, rewarding activity for our volunteers and that volunteers are involved in the decision making process.
- To be inclusive and open, enabling as many people as possible to access our volunteering opportunities.
- To work in partnership with other organisations who also have a community safety ethos.
- To be creative and imaginative in our approach to volunteering, to best serve the needs of promoting community safety.
- To ensure we have the necessary systems and resources in place to best support our community volunteers and the communities we serve.

- 2.4.2 The ESFRS Volunteer Thematic Plan provides a focus to teams and illustrates the value volunteers bring to the community and ESFRS.

- 2.4.3 In addition to the supportive role that volunteers undertake with operational crews in station open days and other events, incident training and exercises, the volunteers are involved in the Personal Resilience Project; a scheme whereby volunteers support vulnerable members of the community who have been subject of a safeguarding alert or similar issue that has detrimentally affected their ability to live unsupported.

2.5 Youth Engagement

- 2.5.1 Youth engagement is undertaken across the service, often by operational staff, through locally organised activities such as football coaching and mentoring young people. Our iESE award winning Safety in Action programme is a collaborative approach providing the opportunity for young people aged 10 to 11 years to experience risky scenarios in a safe environment.

2.6 Partnership Working with Health

- 2.6.7 It is fully recognised that a great number of those individuals that are at greatest risk to fire, road and water risk are as a consequence of poor mental or physical health.

- 2.6.8 The innovative GP Referral Scheme provides for GPs to send ESFRS details of patients whom they consider at high risk of an unelected hospital admission. Our Information Sharing Agreement allows contact details of patients to be shared without consent for a Home Safety Visit to be offered. In addition to identifying potential fire risks these visits provide an opportunity

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for staff to identify risks within the home environment that might cause or contribute accidents, identify the potential to fall and to identify those who are frail and would benefit from an early intervention by health professionals.

3. Protection

3.1 (Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005):

Fire and Rescue Authorities have a duty to enforce fire safety in non-domestic premises and the introduction of this legislation mirrored much of the now extant Fire precautions Act 1971 and Workplace Regulations 1997. It also made the duties applicable to a far larger range of premises such as:

- all non-domestic premises including common parts of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs)
- Premises used by the self-employed (including family run businesses)
- Premises used by the voluntary sector

3.2 How we are assured:

3.3 Business Safety Thematic Plan

3.3.1 Our Business Safety Thematic Plan uses a blended risk-based approach to deliver against our statutory duties, operating an intelligence-led and risk-based inspection programme of non-domestic premises as we strive to continuously reduce fire risk in the built environment. This blended approach includes business engagement, partnership, inspection and enforcement.

3.3.2 When a business is audited, the audit will be carried out by a qualified Business Safety Officer who will follow a set procedure which is designed to establish compliance with the requirements of the Order. The Service always aims to help businesses comply with fire safety legislation, however, at times it has to enforce the law by implementing a formal enforcement procedure and will on occasion prosecute. This is always a last resort and the Service will endeavour to avoid this course of action by working with business owners/managers via a range of key interventions:

- Business Safety staff offering proactive support to businesses to assist in complying with legislation
- Collaborating with our partners by supporting intelligence led thematic inspections and multiagency operations targeting immigration and modern slavery to ensure the most vulnerable in our community are protected from exploitation
- Supporting economic growth and resilience of our local business communities by raising awareness of fire risk and engaging with responsible persons through a variety of initiatives including the development of Primary Authority Partnerships and under normal circumstances we deliver Business Safety thematic engagement events. The Coronavirus pandemic has affected these however, wherever possible and appropriate, we continue to deliver our Service through desktop audits and regular contact with partners and responsible persons
- Developing Safer Living and Safer Care initiatives in partnership with the Care Quality Commission, to support the elderly and vulnerable to obtain safe and secure homes within a caring environment. This is achieved through both inspection of premises and engagement with duty holders promoting the Person Centred Approach to risk, the installation of sprinklers and promotion of new technology such as social alarms
- Information provided digitally to support businesses and;
- Actively supporting the National Fire Chief Council's Business Safety Week 7th – 13th September 2020.

3.3.3 The Business Safety functions are delivered through a sustainable and adaptive structure that enables effective provision at all times of day. Services are delivered by professional staff and operational crews supported through a competency framework informed by best practice and

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responsive to the requirements of the National Framework. Staff will respond to local risk through thematic based planning supported by exploiting new information technologies such as the rollout of agile working and new functionality offered through the upgraded Business Safety recording and operating system (CRM).

- 3.3.4 The Service continues to promote Primary Authority through the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act (RES Act) and continues to highlight the benefits of active Primary Authority Partnerships in East Sussex to improve Fire Safety compliance and support business growth. We have 14 partnerships confirmed and are part of the Business Advice and Support Partnership (BAASP) which is a partnership of Regulatory Services across the South East covering Trading Standards, Fire Safety, Environmental Health and Licensing. BAASP shares knowledge, resources and expertise to provide the best support and advice for local businesses as part of the wider Primary Authority landscape.

<http://www.esfrs.org/business-safety/primary-authority-scheme/>

- 3.3.5 The service continues to support the Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety through the NFCC and implement the recommendations of Government's Building Safety Program.

- 3.3.6 We continue to promote the findings from our fire investigations so that risk assessments better identify sources of ignition and the benefits of active and passive protection. More details can be found on the following link:

<https://www.heads-up.biz/>

- 3.3.7 The Service continues to actively promote sprinklers and continues to provide match funding to secure the installation of sprinkler systems in premises identified as posing a particular risk to occupants and / or firefighters and we promote sprinklers where opportunities present themselves. More detail on sprinklers can be found by following the link below:

<http://www.esfrs.org/business-safety/sprinklers/>

- 3.3.8 We recognise that in exceptional cases; where supported by evidence and it being in the public interest, there is a need to use an appropriate sanction where fire safety standards have not been maintained by a responsible person. Not only has ESFRS developed tools to ensure a consistent and appropriate use of prosecution and Simple Caution as sanctions, we have also developed the use of Informal Cautions, which the NFCC are looking to adopt nationally.

<http://www.esfrs.org/business-safety/business-safety-enforcement/>

- 3.3.9 The service is a statutory consultee under a range of legislation and the Business Safety teams will continue to ensure they respond to consultations in a positive and timely manner as detailed in the Service response charter.

- 3.3.10 The Central Business Safety support team will continue to build on the Business Safety engagement and initiatives library to enable local teams to deliver proactive and reactive business engagement activities increasing knowledge and understanding of fire safety in the business community. Typically this involves identifying opportunities to engage and explain the requirements of the Order at face-to-face events, with supporting material available on our internet site. Through the Business Rates funded initiative, the Service provides the "Safer Business Training" scheme to further support this work.

<https://www.esfrs.org/business-safety/introduction-to-business-fire-safety-course/>

- 3.3.11 Our Fire Investigation webpage "Heads-up" site also highlights fatal fires and includes lessons learnt from relevant and significant fire related incidents.

<https://www.heads-up.biz/>

3.4 Safer Business Training

- 3.4.1 Utilising funding from Business Rates pooling fund the Service offers a one day course to small and medium sized businesses to provide training and advice on risk assessments to assist businesses to comply with the legislation and ensure the continuing safety of their staff and customers. The aim of the course is to reduce the number of businesses that may be at risk of enforcement action and increase fire risk assessment skills to reduce the risk of fire to the business and community.

3.5 Grenfell Tower Improvement Plan

- 3.5.1 Following the dreadful and tragic outcomes of the Grenfell Tower fire, ESFRS, like all UKFRS's carried out a gap analysis against part 1 of Sir Martin Moore-Bick's public enquiry. The Grenfell Tower Inquiry was created to examine the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the fire at Grenfell Tower on the night of 14 June 2017.

<https://www.grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk/>

- 3.5.2 Our gap analysis identified 136 recommendations for change. These have formed a body of work linked to improvements in existing emergency response Policy such as Fire Survival Guidance (the link between our Control centre and Officers at scene) and the purchase of emergency smoke hoods for evacuation purposes. Most actions are interdependent and involve extensive training for all staff at our Control centre, Fire Stations and Officers.
- 3.5.3 Complete implementation of all 136 actions will continue to roll out over the coming months being reported to our internal Operations Committee, Senior Leadership Team and Scrutiny and Audit Panel.
- 3.5.4 In 2020, the Service ran a series of improvement seminars where incident commanders at all four levels of Command were reminded of the different emergency evacuation strategies that premises may employ in high-rise premises. The presentations included input on Business Safety compliance with the RR(FS)O, passive and active measures and how some premises may have employed fire engineered solutions. The seminars also enabled the attendees to consider a range of tactical options in the event of fires at residential high-rise premises along with the application of Fire Survival Guidance.

3.6 Building Risk Review

- 3.6.1 On 5th September 2019, the Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) stated "I expect all high rise buildings to have been inspected or assured by the time the new building safety regime is in place, or no later than 2021" and has provided the Authority with grant funding to deliver this task.
- 3.6.2 To fulfil the conditions of grant funding, all high-rise residential buildings (HRRBs - multi-occupied residential buildings over 18m or more than six floors) in East Sussex Fire Authority's area, will be assessed on a building-by-building basis, triaged by a competent Fire Safety Regulator (FSR), and a minimum question set returned.
- 3.6.3 This data will then be used to inform the new Building Safety Regulator (BSR) when it is fully operational and help to determine which buildings need to be prioritised for a 'safety case' under the new building safety regime. The BRR Programme will result in all in scope HRRBs being triaged and the highest risk HRRBs being audited/inspected. As a result, HRRBs requiring

further action will be identified, to enable them to be incorporated into the Business Safety Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP).

- 3.6.4 The Authority has used the MHCLG grant funding to establish a special project team to deliver the BRR programme, ensuring all buildings in scope will be assessed within the timeframe of the programme through a triage process. At this time, the team have identified 357 in-scope premises requiring assessment and triage.
- 3.6.5 The project team continues to collect a wide range of building data, to provide a greater understanding of the hazards and associated risks in the built environment, including:
- Firefighter risk information
 - Resident vulnerabilities
 - Building plans
 - Building construction detail
 - Assessment of the adequacy of facilities for firefighters
 - Fire engineering solutions
- 3.6.6 The process allows officers to undertake an assessment of buildings to determine whether a full audit/inspection is required, or in cases of lower risk buildings, whether a simple form and data collection process is appropriate.
- 3.6.7 It is clear that during routine work, the Group Business Safety teams will interact with buildings falling within the scope of the BRR programme and therefore, it is important that in line with current activities, the premises history in CRM is always interrogated in the first instance, and where a premises is identified as falling within the scope of the programme, the following process is followed:

Risk Based Inspection Programme

- Where the Group Business Safety team identify a building falling with the BRR project is due for an audit, this will be undertaken by the BRR project team

Fire Safety Complaints

- Where the complaint identifies that a life safety issue exists, the daily nominated business safety officer will be informed in order to investigate the complaint and take any necessary action to resolve the issue.
- Where the complaint is of a more minor nature, the matter should be passed to the BRR project team.
- Fire Safety Inquiries
- Where the Group Business Safety team receive inquiries relating to a HRRB, the matter should be passed to the BRR project team.

Post Fire Inspections

- Where the Group Business Safety team identify a HRRB requiring a post fire audit, the matter should be passed to the BRR project team
- Building consultations
- Where the Group Business Safety team receive a building consultation relating to a HRRB, the process below should be followed:
- Existing Buildings - The BRR team should be notified where the works impact the means of escape or the external construction of the building, including the construction of additional floors bringing a building in to the scope of the BRR programme
- New Buildings - The BRR team should be notified to enable the team to carry out a full audit/inspection, or in cases of lower risk buildings, complete a simple form and data collection process once the building is occupied
- Non-compliant Cladding or Construction - Where the Group Business Safety team receive inquiries relating to an out of scope building, which has been identified as having

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non-compliant cladding or construction as defined in the “Consolidated Advice Note”, the BRR team should be notified.

- Cladding Remediation - Where buildings are undergoing cladding remediation, regardless of the scope of the BRR programme, a nationally agreed process identifies that a joint inspection with the Health & Safety Executive will take place due to the cross over in legislation and the associated hazards. These joint inspections will be resourced through the BRR team.

4. Emergency Response

4.1 (Fire and Rescue Services Act Section 7 & 8):

A fire and rescue authority must make provision for extinguishing fires, road traffic collisions and other emergencies by recruiting and training staff, providing services and equipment necessary efficiently to meet all normal requirements; make arrangements for dealing with calls and for summoning personnel; make arrangements for obtaining information and prevent or limit damage to property resulting from action taken.

4.2 How we are assured:

4.2.1 The data from the ORR enables us to understand that our IRMP 2020 – 2025 accurately reflects the fire and rescue related risks now and for the foreseeable future.

4.3 Response and Resilience Thematic Plan

4.3.1 The ability for ESFRS to effectively and efficiently discharge its statutory duties under Sections 7 and 8 of the FRS Act relies on the Service investing in a fleet of 33 frontline fire appliances. These state-of-the-art vehicles are equipped with a range of tools including six Breathing Apparatus sets per vehicle with telemetry to enable the best level of supervision for our Firefighters who crew them, compressed air Foam generating equipment (CAFS), battery operated rescue equipment unhindered by hydraulic hoses, thermal imaging cameras and gas monitoring equipment etc.

4.3.2 The role of our central response and resilience team is to plan for the highest levels of operational preparedness to enable our crews to respond effectively to all the fire and rescue related risks identified in our IRMP. Using the thematic plan which is closely aligned to the IRMP and the 24 station risk profiles, the team work closely with our crews, our control room staff, our Engineers, Health and Safety team and the representative bodies so we are assured that they have the best appliances, equipment and resources to deal with all foreseeable incidents.

4.3.3 East Sussex Fire Control

The East Sussex Fire Control (ESFC) mobilises our assets to deal with thousands of calls to emergency incidents. The ESFC at Haywards heath is crewed by four watches of six highly trained staff on a 24/7 basis. Following a robust business case that considered our requirements to be financially accountable and the wider duty to collaborate, East Sussex Fire Authority committed to a Joint Fire Control centre run by Surrey Fire and Rescue Service. From Autumn 2021, this state-of-the-Art Fire Control will jointly deliver emergency mobilisations without compromise.

4.3.4 Fire and Rescue Stations

ESFRS responds to an extremely wide range of emergency incidents with its fleet operating from 24 fire stations across East Sussex and the City of Brighton and Hove. Stations are crewed by operational staff who work different shift patterns depending upon local risk:

- Wholetime: firefighters operate on stations 24 hours per day, working 12 hour shifts
- Day Crewing: during the daytime the station is crewed by wholetime firefighters who also live next to the station to provide emergency cover overnight
- On-Call: firefighters live or work in the local community near to the station and respond to emergency calls via alerters

4.3.5 Operational Resilience Plan

A critical part of our IRMP 2020 – 2025 is the “Operational Resilience Plan” which focusses on improvements to our current response model of 15 immediately available frontline fire appliances. Its aim is to provide 18 immediately available and 6 resilience frontline appliances at the start of

each day before demand. This new Policy will be replacing the Core Stations and Combined Crewing Policies during 2021 – 2022, better aligning resources to risk.

4.3.6 **Operational Risk**

Section 7(2)(d) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act requires fire authorities to make arrangements for inspection of certain premises to obtain information for Firefighter and community safety. These visits are carried out by our Firefighters and they assist in the maintenance of knowledge of the site, equipment and any particular hazards associated with the building. The resulting plans, referred to as Site Specific Risk Information (SSRI) are transferred to all frontline Fire appliances via mobile data terminals and can be accessed and used in the event of an emergency.

We use the 7(2)(d) visits together with any relevant data collection methods to assist in dealing with an incident, informing command decision making and ensuring public and Firefighter safety. In 2020, we started to radically improve our current provision to enhance the timely availability of risk critical information at the fireground with updated mobile data terminals and a state-of-the-art Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system which also stores our Business Safety files. The introduction of mobile technology on each Fire appliance allows crews to immediately update premises risk data at an organisational level and during September 2021, will link to the Joint Fire Control with West Sussex and Surrey Fire and Rescue Services in addition to linked information from the Building Risk review Team.

4.3.7 **Incident Debriefing and Organisational Learning**

Operational Assurance has been embedded into Service policy to organisational learning. The Service has a direct link to National Operational Learning (NOL) to ensure currency with National learning and share any learning identified within East Sussex as agreed suitable. The process enables us to horizon scan and receive national learning reports such as the Grenfell Tower phase 1 report, the Cube fire in Manchester, The Manchester Arena bombing etc.

We have a defined and managed Operational Assurance (OA) process overseen by the service Operational Assurance Manager. Within this process we monitor the outcomes from fire investigations (FI), outcomes identified within the National Operational Learning or Joint Operational Learning databases, as well as recommendations from external enquiries including Coroner reports. Exception reports are sent to the Operations Committee, who in turn will take any highlights to the Senior Leadership Team and if necessary to the Fire Authority Scrutiny and Audit Panel before being rolled out to wider staff groups in Policy and training. Grenfell Tower improvements are a good example of this process in use.

The incident debriefing profile has a distinct identity and both historical and new learning is communicated through various platforms including 'Assurance in Action' and 'core brief' publications, which are vital in embedding the learning process. All new Level 2 Response Officers and above shall be trained to carry out debriefs to add resilience and authenticity to the process. The Ops P&P team will lead on any multi agency debriefs delivered via the Local Resilience Forum, with any multi agency learning progressed via the Joint Operational Learning (JOL) on line platform.

The Operational Assurance process is linked to various ESFRS departments to track and ensure end to end learning.

4.3.8 **Internal Audits and Assessments**

East Sussex County Council's Internal Audit provides our internal audit service, independently assessing the effectiveness of our governance, risk management and internal control arrangements. Internal Audit supports the role of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel. An annual internal audit plan is agreed by the Scrutiny & Audit Panel following consultation between the Senior Leadership Team and Internal Audit about the risk priorities and the results of this work is then reported back to the Panel. Individual reports on our systems are evaluated by internal audit and include recommendations to enhance controls, and then action plans are developed to address and implement audit recommendations.

The results of these internal audit reviews and the Head of Internal Audit's Annual Opinion are reported to the Scrutiny and Audit Panel.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

The Home Office published an updated National Framework Document in May 2018. In addition the Home Office has established Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Fire & Rescue Services as an independent inspection regime. Currently our operational preparedness, policies and procedures are being reviewed ready for our inspection in the Spring of 2022. All inspection reports have been published including the first State of Fire Report that specifies the areas for improvement an indication of the areas of focus such as operational effectiveness, culture, protection and use of resources.

The Service uses the outcomes of its first inspection by HMICFRS carried out in tranche 3 of 2019 to ensure our servicewide improvement agenda continues to make progress, measured at the Senior Leadership Team and Operations Committee as appropriate.

4.3.9 **Coronavirus Pandemic**

Our second inspection by HMICFRS was held virtually during the Coronavirus pandemic and second national lockdown. The processes put in place to effectively manage and lead our Service with no adverse impact to our response model was thanks to an early decision through the Sussex resilience Forum to declare a major emergency. We convened weekly Emergency Management Team meetings, overseeing risk based processes to assure our workplaces remained COVID secure, giving our Firefighters the best level of protection. Processes include internal track and trace and Station deep-clean overseen at tactical level daily by our COVID Working Group. This body of evidence enabled HMICFRS Inspectors to commend how ESFRS had and continued to cope with the pandemic

4.3.10 **Station Audits**

The Station audit programme is designed to support the continual improvement of our front line delivery services in terms of effectiveness, compliance with service operational and administrative procedures but above all, to ensure that the operational preparedness and safety of crews remains a priority. The purpose of the audits is to ensure that the current levels of knowledge and skills of crews on stations is benchmarked against current policies and procedures to ensure that operational preparedness and firefighter safety is maintained to a high level.

Areas to be audited are determined through a collaborative approach involving all the relevant managers and is led by Operational Planning and Procedure (Ops P&P) and Safer Communities on an annual basis.

Audit areas include:

- Areas of improvement in relation to firefighting, rescues and hazardous materials identified through the Ops Assurance process
- Fire investigations
- Health and Safety including thematic sampling
- Training planning, delivery and recording
- Risk information gathering and environmental responsibilities
- Station security, business continuity and resilience
- End of month returns
- Relevant areas from HMICFRS inspections

The audit team will give verbal feedback during the station audit followed by a report which is sent to the Group and Station Manager responsible for the workplace that has been audited and a copy to the Assistant Chief Fire Officer. The report contains the rating scored against each examined area.

4.3.11 **Fire Standards**

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Fire Standards Board have published a series of four national standards. These provide a single point of reference for all FRS's to align their internal policies and procedures against.

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

ESFRS have a clear route for acceptance, gap analysis and assurance provided by their Operational Planning and Policy Team reporting to the Operations Committee.

4.3.12 **Operations Committee**

To support robust operational preparedness and operational assurance the ACFO chairs an Operations Committee which considers corporate operational assurance, operational readiness, performance, policy, practice and training. This committee ensures that the Service is managing the oversight and delivery of all its responsibilities in respect of emergency response operations and has the necessary systems and policies to ensure adoption of good practice and compliance with statutory responsibilities. The Operations Committee reviews operational performance including the outcomes of national, regional and local incident debriefs along with the outcomes from the ESFRS station audit and inspection programme.

5. Other Emergencies

5.1 (Fire and Rescue Services Act Section 9)

The requires ESFRS to make arrangements for dealing with emergencies other than fires and road traffic collisions which may require some functions to be discharged outside the authority's area. 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, Urban Search and Rescue and serious or wide-area flooding.

5.2 The Order complements the National Mutual Assistance Protocol, to which we are a signatory. This requires fire authorities to make a reasonable response to requests for assistance in relation to any large-scale emergency outside of their area.

5.3 How we are assured:

5.3.1 ESFRS maintain two specialist assets to enable us to deal with **both local and national incidents** of the type described above.

5.3.2 We house a Mass Decontamination Unit at Eastbourne Fire Station that is crewed 24/7 and supported if required by staff from surrounding stations to manage the decontamination of Firefighters and large numbers of people if necessary. ESFRS also house a High-Volume Pump set at Hove Fire Station again, crewed 24/7 that consists of two large prime-movers with two demountable modules. Appliances of this type are used extensively across the UK particularly during wide area flooding incidents and most recently at Whaley Bridge Reservoir in Derbyshire to alleviate the risk of dam failure. This can move 7000 litres per minute and carries 3 Km of 150mm diameter hose. Both vehicles have been deployed within the County at notable incidents.

5.3.3 We apply our Policies by preparing emergency plans, train our staff and undertake regular business continuity exercises to ensure they are robust. We consistently undertake operational debriefs that we attend, as well as fully engaging with any national level debriefs for incidents that we have supported under the National Mutual Assistance Protocol. Lessons learnt from these debriefing events are fed back into the planning and assurance process as part of the review of our emergency plans.

5.3.4 The Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP), is a program that has delivered joint command training to commanders from all three emergency services in order to improve the way we work together at operational incidents. The concept is embedded into our risk assessments and operational guidance and under normal circumstances outside of Coronavirus restrictions, we aim to test and exercise jointly in realistic environments. Plans to exercise in the virtual environment have proven difficult to realise currently, however this avenue remains open with the desire to help organise triennial refreshers for all three Services using virtual platforms with realistic and time-bound tactical decision-making exercises.

5.3.5 ESFRS has entered into a range of Memorandums of Understanding with partner agencies with the overriding premise of enhancing each other's resilience. The list of MoU's can be evidenced on our intranet page using the following link:

[https://esfrsorg.sharepoint.com/sites/ESFRSIntranet/SitePages/Memorandums-of-Understanding-\(MOUs\).aspx](https://esfrsorg.sharepoint.com/sites/ESFRSIntranet/SitePages/Memorandums-of-Understanding-(MOUs).aspx)

6. Mutual Aid

6.1 (Fire and Rescue Services Act Sections 13 & 16)

Fire and Rescue authorities are required to enter into reinforcement schemes with other fire and rescue authorities, for securing mutual assistance. Section 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act enables fire and rescue authorities to enter into arrangements for the discharge of their functions by others.

6.2 How we are assured

6.2.1 ESFRS have a reinforcement scheme in place for our call handling with Cambridgeshire FRS, which provides resilience to our mobilising arrangements. We have a collaboration agreement with Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service along with a confidentiality agreement for suppliers. On our expected transition date in autumn 2021, we will enact our Section 16 agreement for the provision of a tri-Service Fire Control with Surrey FRS.

6.2.2 ESFRS have also entered into a series of key Memorandum's of Understanding (MoU's) with selected partners where there are mutual benefits to both organisations in the interests of efficiency and effectiveness. These include:

South-East Coast Ambulance Service	Gaining entry
	Immediate Emergency Care
	Hazardous Area Response Team interoperability
	Covid-19 Vaccine Programme
Environment Agency	Co-operation for Flood response
	Pollution Incident Prevention and Mitigation
	Preventing Waste and Industry site fires
UK Power Networks	Specific working protocols in order that incidents requiring firefighting and/or response (incidents) are dealt with in a systematic and effective manner
Sussex and Surrey Police	Drone operations
	Fire and Arson Investigation
	Explosives – Information sharing
Police/ SECAmb/ WSFRS	Inter-Agency Liaison Officers – Information and intelligence sharing
Kent and Medway Fire Authority	Large Animal Rescues
HM Maritime and Coastguard Agency	Interoperability & training
Coroners Society of England and Wales	Constructive co-operation
Operation Florian	Transfer of appliances and equipment
Multiple agencies	Work-related death protocols

7. Health & Safety Assurance

- 7.1 The Health, Safety & Wellbeing staff give advice to all employees on matters of health and safety, as well as advising managers on legal compliance, policy formulation, training and safety performance monitoring activities.
- 7.2 The effective management of health and safety, leading to fewer accidents involving injury and time taken off work, is beneficial to staff and an investment which helps ESFRS achieve the high standards which the people of East Sussex and Brighton & Hove have come to expect. We are fully committed to achieving the government targets for health and safety laid out in the document "Revitalising Health and Safety".

7.3 How we are assured

- 7.3.1 Each employee will be given information, instruction and training as is necessary to enable the safe performance of their work activities. Adequate facilities and arrangements have been developed and are well embedded in Policy and training to enable employees and their representatives to raise issues of health and safety at work since it is via an effective partnership that successful health and safety management can best be achieved.
- 7.3.2 ESFRS has had a H&S management system and is developing its system based on Health & Safety Executive (HSE) guidance to become far more robust and user-friendly. There are clearly defined management responsibilities and the Authority assesses and manages the risks arising from its activities, consults its employees on matters affecting H&S, and provides training and information to employees. Its policies have allowed a good health and safety culture through open and no-surprises relationship with its staff and Trade Unions, recognised in the Health, Safety & Wellbeing Committee and active Workplace Safety Representative meetings.
- 7.3.3 The Authority has introduced an electronic management system to support the reporting and investigation of all accidents and near misses that occur and to track the investigations conducted with the intention of preventing a recurrence.
- 7.3.4 As part of the H&S Management System there is a programme of audits and inspections. The audits are based on the Royal Society for Prevention of Accidents Quality Safety Audit system and its performance indicators. These audits and inspections inform the annual review of H&S Policy and performance. They also contribute towards an Annual Health and Safety report submitted to the Authority's Scrutiny and Audit Panel.
- 7.3.5 ESFRS has an Occupational Health team that works collaboratively with Surrey and Sussex Police Service to support the health and wellbeing of staff. ESFRS has also introduced a Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) process that continues to develop as managers and staff understand the benefits. The ACFO is currently the National Fire Chief Councils Mental Health Lead and there are two active mental health campaigns accessed via our Health, Safety and Wellbeing intranet webpages; "Healthy Mind" and "Healthy Body".

8. Civil Contingencies Act 2004

8.1 Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 fire and rescue authorities, through local and regional resilience forums where appropriate, must work in co-operation with other emergency services and agencies to ensure an effective response to a full range of emergencies from localised incidents to catastrophic emergencies.

8.2 East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service are a category 1 responder under the Civil Contingences Act 2004. We are required to formulate business continuity plans that ensure the continuation of our priority activities in the event of an emergency (an event or situation that threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the UK, the environment of a place in the UK or war or terrorism which threatens serious damage to the security of the UK). We are also required to consider these risks in planning what resources we need to prevent their occurrence, protect life, premises and the environment from the effects and respond to them in the event they occur.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/preparation-and-planning-for-emergencies-responsibilities-of-responder-agencies-and-others>

8.3 How we are assured

8.3.1 A cross-service Assurance and Governance Group oversees the Service's responsibilities in relation to business continuity and this is chaired by The Deputy Chief Fire Officer. All Service departments maintain their business continuity plans that are available on our intranet and each department Manager has responsibility for ensuring their staff are aware of the potential impacts and activities in the event that any identified hazard emerges.

8.3.2 We have agreed levels of operational service that ensure our defined prioritised activities can be delivered so far as is reasonably practicable. These are:

- Delivering community & statutory fire safety (Preventing emergencies as our primary priority);
- Responding to 999 emergencies (and learning from them to prevent re-occurrence);
- Supporting national resilience (in other Counties at larger, more protracted incidents) and;
- All support functions that enable the above

Further details on how we plan for emergencies can be found here:

<https://www.esfrs.org/about-us/publication-of-information/strategies-plans-and-performance-information/planning-for-emergencies/>

8.3.3 The Sussex Resilience Forum (SRF) is a multi-agency partnership made up of representatives from local public services, including the blue-light emergency services, local authorities, the NHS, the Environment Agency and other partners. These risks can affect the economy, cause disruption and impact on the day to day lives of our community and therefore understanding these risks within the County and the City provides a clearly defined baseline for us to develop our provision of service to the community we serve.

8.3.4 ESFRS is an active leading partner of the Sussex Resilience Forum (SRF) and as such continues to horizon scan all risks linked to the national risk register. The SRF maintain specific risk plans relating to the UK's exit from the European Union. ESFRS consider the risk to heritage sites, the environment and the continuing risk from terrorism within its IRMP. The National Risk Assessment is given careful consideration by the SRF and the Service to monitor any new risks identified through these processes.

- 8.3.5 ESFRS consider the wider risk assessments included within the SRF's Community Risk Register (CRR) in our IRMP to ensure that proposed changes to our service delivery complement, as far as possible, the strategies of other local responders and central government agencies. We make significant contributions to the preparation, planning and response to a wide range of events that are considered as part of the CRR. The Coronavirus pandemic presented particular challenges to the SRF and ESFRS led the command and control of all agencies to ensure the continued flow of freight traffic to the continent over the Christmas and New Year period 2020-2021.
- 8.3.6 We also plan for, and occasionally respond to, incidents of such scale and/or complexity that local resources may be insufficient even when taking into account mutual aid agreements. ESFRS's allocation includes a MDU at Eastbourne Fire Station and following the ORR, the HVP is being relocated to Seaford Fire Station without detriment to service/national availability.

8.4 Business Continuity

- 8.4.1 ESFRS will take all reasonable steps to ensure that in the event of a service interruption, agreed mission critical services will be maintained and normal services restored, as soon as reasonably possible. To ensure that this happens, it is Service policy to have in place robust business continuity recovery plans that are regularly reviewed and tested, and key staff appropriately trained to manage these procedures.
- 8.4.2 For a short-term disruption, Directorate Heads will lead on recovery arrangements as detailed within the various Business Continuity Plans in place. For long term/corporate level disruptions, a formal Emergency Management Team (EMT) will be stood up to manage the recovery; this will be overseen by a Strategic level manager. ESFRS plan biannual Emergency Management Team exercises to test the latest major loss of staff plans - the lessons learned will be incorporated into a final revision of the business continuity plan.
- 8.4.3 The ESFRS Business Continuity Management process aligns to the requirements of the ISO 22301 Standard. All Directorate and Departmental continuity plans have been reviewed and remain current, published on our intranet under the Operational Support and Resilience directorate webpage.

9. Localism Act 2011

9.1 The Localism Act takes as its starting point the existing statutory powers of fire and rescue authorities and then gives the Fire Authority the power to do:

- Anything they consider appropriate for the purposes of carrying out their functions
- Anything they consider appropriate for purposes incidental to carrying out their functions
- Anything they consider appropriate for purposes indirectly incidental to carrying out their functions

9.2 It also added three new sections to the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, which allows Fire and Rescue Authorities to place a charging policy in support of its strategy to deal with unwanted fire signals received from automatic fire detection systems. The charging power allows us a level of discretion in that we may decide not to charge at all, as is the case now, or we may charge different amounts to different groups of recipients when we respond to specific categories of calls.

9.3 How we are assured:

9.3.1 ESFRS maintains a Memorandum of Understanding with Kent & Medway Fire Authority which sees the Service undertaking large animal rescues on behalf of Kent across a large area of Kent and for which the Service is able to charge.

9.3.2 Under section 38(1) of the Act we are required to prepare a Pay Policy Statement. The Authority is responsible for ensuring that that the pay policy statement sets out the issues relating to the pay of the workforce and in particular the senior officers and the lowest paid employees. This ensures that there is the appropriate accountability and transparency of the salaries of our senior staff. The purpose of the statement is to provide greater transparency on how taxpayers' money is used in relation to the pay and rewards for public sector staff.

For more information please use the following link:

<https://www.esfrs.org/about-us/publication-of-information/>