

EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Meeting	Scrutiny and Audit Panel
Date	21 July 2022
Title of Report	2020/21 Service Benchmarking Report
By	Liz Ridley, Assistant Director Planning & Improvement
Lead Officers	Sharon Milner, Planning & Intelligence Manager Marcus Whiting, Planning & intelligence Analyst

Background Papers	Employee comparisons from the 'Fire and rescue workforce and pensions statistics: England, April 2020 to March 2021' Station and appliance comparisons from the 'CIPFA annual statistics for 2020-21' Health and Safety comparisons from the 'Fire and rescue workforce and pensions statistics: England, April 2020 to March 2021' Incident comparisons from the 'Home Office Incident Recording System, Fire Statistics: England April 2020 to March 2021' and the 'Fire Incident Response Times: England, for 2020-21' Sickness comparisons for the FG2 from the 'National Fire & Rescue Service Occupational Health Performance Report April 2020 – March 2021' Prevention and protection comparisons from 'Fire prevention & protection statistics, England, April 2020 to March 2021'
--------------------------	--

Appendices	Appendix 1 East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service Benchmarking Report 2020/21
-------------------	--

Implications

CORPORATE RISK		LEGAL	
ENVIRONMENTAL		POLICY	
FINANCIAL		POLITICAL	
HEALTH & SAFETY		OTHER (please specify)	
HUMAN RESOURCES		CORE BRIEF	
EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT			

PURPOSE OF REPORT	To present the Fire Statistics for 2020/21 and comparative benchmarking of East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service against its family group in order to
--------------------------	---

provide context to support the Authority's future decision making.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report serves as an illustrative benchmark of East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service performance against other fire and rescue service performance. Appendix 1 provides a more in depth comparison against the twelve fire and rescue services that make up Family Group 2. These are Services deemed to be of similar size in terms of area and population.

The report brings together a wide range of information about how East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service compares in delivering its services to local communities, including the cost of service provision, current performance measures, as well as organisational resourcing.

Benchmarking performance enables the Service to make decisions based on the results and provides a spotlight to managers for further investigation. Results of previous year's benchmarking exercises has enabled the Service to prioritise a number of areas where concentrated effort has borne positive results in the 2020/21 year-end figures.

The Panel is asked to note that the report contains information as at the 31 March 2021 as the national statistics are compiled in arrears.

RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to:

1. Consider the results of the report in relation to its future plans, ensuring that action is taken in order to address any areas of concern.
-

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report aims to provide the Panel with a summary of the performance across the fire and rescue service sector. The national context with key findings from the Fire & Rescue Incident Statistics, is summarised first; followed by the Service's annual benchmarking report that compares ESFRS against the twelve fire and rescue services that make up Family Group 2. These are Services deemed to be of similar size in terms of area and population.
- 1.2 Appendix 1 provides comparator information across Family Group 2, focussing on the following areas:
- Employee comparisons from the 'Fire and rescue workforce and pensions statistics: England, April 2020 to March 2021'
 - Station and appliance comparisons from the 'CIPFA annual statistics for 2020-21'
 - Health and Safety comparisons from the 'Fire and rescue workforce and pensions statistics: England, April 2020 to March 2021'
 - Incident comparisons from the 'Home Office Incident Recording System, Fire Statistics: England April 2020 to March 2021' and the 'Fire Incident Response Times: England, for 2020-21'
 - Sickness comparisons for the FG2 from the 'National Fire & Rescue Service Occupational Health Performance Report April 2020 – March 2021'
- 1.3 The main purposes of the benchmarking report is to help us understand why we are achieving our performance levels, where our performance varies and help to investigate why variations may occur. This also provides us with an opportunity to see where other services are achieving better results than us and have conversations with them about any learnings and good practice that can be shared to improve our own situation. The results of previous benchmarking reports has enabled the Service to prioritise a number of areas where concentrated effort has borne positive results in the 2020/21 year-end figures.

2 NATIONAL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

2.1 Fire & Rescue Incident Statistics

There was a 2% decrease in the number of fires that FRS attended in 2020/21 against 2019/20. FRS attended 11% less AFA calls in 2020/21 when compared with the previous year. Additional research undertaken by the Home Office suggests that these reductions tended to fall over the periods of national lockdown imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. There was an 8% decrease in attendances at medical incidents and an 8% increase in all other special service incident types.

2.2 Fire & Rescue workforce and pensions statistics

Total workforce and leavers

The number of FTE staff employed by FRS at 31st March 2021 is similar to the previous year (40,029 in 2020/21 and 40,149 in 2019/20). Around 8% of the headcount left FRS in 2020/21 35% of this was due to normal or early retirement.

Workforce diversity

Women now make up 7.5% of all firefighters. 4.7% of firefighters were from an ethnic minority and 3.4% were lesbian/gay.

Firefighter health and safety

There were 12% fewer firefighter injuries in 2020/21 against the previous year and one firefighter fatality during a training activity.

Firefighter pensions

Firefighters' Pension Scheme expenditure in 2020/21 was around £902 million, a less than one percent decrease compared with the previous year.

2.3 Fire prevention and protection statistics

Fire prevention

In 2020/21, FRS and their partners completed 169,554 face to face HFSCs and a further 90,114 virtual HFSCs. This number was hugely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2019/20 FRS and their partners completed 588,666.

Fire protection:

In 2020/21 FRS carried out 34,423 Fire Safety Audits down from 48,414 previous year. This has also been really impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. These audits were carried out in two per cent of premises known to FRS.

2.4 Fire & Rescue service Sickness statistics

The total shifts lost per member of staff for all staff groups equates to 7.64 shifts per member of staff (9.35 shifts lost in the previous year). This is compiled on information from 39 FRS.

3. CURRENT POSITION FOR ESFRS

3.1 The key areas of 2020/21 performance in *Operational Statistics* identified above for ESFRS are as follows:

- There were two fire fatalities in 2020/21, one fewer than in 2019/20, both of these were in accidental dwelling fire.
- ESFRS attended 996 primary fires in 2020/21, a decrease of 4.4% on the previous year but a 37.0% reduction since 2010/11. The national trend was a 10% decrease.
- In 2020/21, ESFRS attended 4,467 false alarms a decrease of 4.6% from the 4,683 false alarms recorded in 2019/20.
- ESFRS attended 3,103 non-fire incidents in 2020/21, 13.3% lower in 2019/20.
- The most common types of non-fire incidents attended by ESFRS were Assist other agencies (26%) effecting entry (18%), flooding (12%), road traffic collisions (11%) and lift release (8%).
- Financial comparisons - ESFRS has the third highest cost per Council Tax Band D against FG2.
- In 2020/21 ESFRS reported 6.8 shifts lost per person for WT and 6.5 for Control staff and 6.2 for support staff.

3.2 The main purposes of the benchmarking report is to help us understand why we are achieving our performance levels, where our performance varies and help to investigate why variations may occur.

4. OUTCOMES FROM PREVIOUS BENCHMARKING EXERCISES

4.1 This report provides the Service with an opportunity to consider its performance against those of its Peers. Over recent years this report has enabled the Service to

focus on a number of areas where its performance is consistently in the bottom quartile.

4.2 Accidental dwelling fires

4.2.1 The accidental dwelling fire working group continues to meet on a monthly basis. This group includes representation from operational personnel across the service area, The community safety team, the communications and marketing team and the planning and intelligence team. Together they monitor any trends in increases of ADFs in specific areas to try and identify any underlying reasons. Throughout the year there have been a number of social media campaigns and promotions on a number of key safety messages as well as highlighting specific incident types as they occurred. For example the following link is providing an update to what happened at a fire in Eastbourne and includes some safety information concerning being careful with candles <https://www.esfrs.org/news/2021-news/candle-warning-after-fire-in-eastbourne/>

4.2.2 ESFRS attended the least number of accidental dwelling fires ever reported in 2020/21, (443), a further 2% reduction on the 2019/20 result. However ESFRS still attends more accidental dwelling fires per 1,000 population than any other member of FG2.

4.2.3 ESFRS undertook 7,178 Home Fire Safety Visits between 1st April and 31st March 2020/21. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic all of these calls were done over the telephone.

4.3 Sickness absence

4.3.1 Sickness still remains an area where we are high in comparison to our family group. We had the highest level of sickness for WT and Control staff in FG2 for 2020/21 with 7.04 days lost per employee (previously 10.77), which is above the 2020/21 average of 6.89. However, five FRS from FG2 did not provide data in 2020/21. ESFRS support staff had the 3rd highest level of sickness (from the 11 FRS that provided data) in FG2 with 5.56 days lost to sickness per employee. This figure is above the 2020/21 average of 4.82.

4.4 The number of high risk inspections

4.4.1 This was introduced as a new priority area in 2017/18 and critically important following the Grenfell Tower fire on 14 June 2017. As can be seen by the 2020/21 benchmarking report ESFRS completed the 4th lowest recorded number of high risk audits per 1,000 non-domestic properties with 10.7, whereas Durham completed the most with 50.3 per 1,000 non-domestic properties. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic these audits were undertaken over the telephone

4.5 False Alarm Apparatus

4.5.1 Similarly the benchmarking report has shown that the Service is high in relation to false alarms apparatus and lift rescues in recent years. This led to the Service undertaking a demand management review which was consulted in as part of the

2020-2025 IRMP. The IRMP was agreed at the Fire Authority meeting in September 2020 and our attendance to fire alarms operating in low risk commercial premises has now been reviewed and a paper presenting the recommendations from this work stream went to and was agreed by the Scrutiny and Audit Panel in July 2021.

- 4.5.2 The outcome of this report means that ESFRS will adopt a 'nil attendance policy' for AFA calls from non- residential properties (with exceptions) between 0900hrs and 1700hrs Monday to Friday. This policy went live in April 2022 and will be monitored going forward.