

County Council – 17 February 2017

Agenda Item 8(b) – Notice of Motion by Mr Glennon

Attendance Times West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (WSFRS)

National Independent Report of Response Times

The annual statistical release 'Fire Incident Response Times April 2015 to March 2016, England' has been recently published. The data is derived from Incident Recording System (IRS) records from all fire services. The main release and links to data tables are available via this website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fire-incident-response-times-april-2015-to-march-2016-england>

The release reports statistics on trends in response times to primary fires (dwellings, other buildings, road vehicles and other outdoor fires) and secondary fires, in England, for the financial year 2015/16. Some of the statistics are broken down to individual Fire Services. Data presented in the annual report shows WSFRS performance on 2015/16 compared to 2014/15, and comparison against services in the same family group.

The independent report shows that overall, national response times to fires have increased gradually over the past 20 years, but did show slight decreases for some types of fire between 2014/15 and 2015/16.

"Overall, response times to fires have increased gradually over the past 20 years. A range of possible factors could contribute to this. These may include changing traffic levels, health and safety policies, 'drive to arrive' policies and control staff typically asking more questions of the caller to better assess the risk and attendance needed. However, it is difficult to isolate the impact of any of these individual factors, and there may also be other factors, locally or nationally, which affect response times."

Local Standards/Measures of Response Times

The WSFRS Emergency Response Standards were approved by members in October 2008 and came into effect from 1 April 2009. For Critical fires this means that attendance performance is measured according to the assessed risk in the particular Super output area. WSFRS has a statutory duty to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan based on local risk and provide performance standards reflecting the risk.

Locally measured attendance time data is available for Critical Fire and Critical Special Service attendance times for service over last eight years. Our attendance standard is measured against slightly different criteria and incident types than the national data, but still shows broad agreement with the data measured nationally in terms of trends, for first pump attendance. (National data does not report on 2nd pump attendance).

WSFRS standards are very demanding stretch targets (some of the most demanding in England) and WSFRS will not reach them in all areas of the county. This is an integral part of our link between Prevention and Response. Rural areas in particular do have longer attendance times.

Response Times Variance

In terms of Critical Fire Risk Grades for the service overall, WSFRS fastest response times are to areas designated as Very High and High Risk. The critical Fire risk map shows the risk of each Super output area.

For some stations there are relatively few incidents in the station ground (geographical area) - especially when this is further divided into individual risk ratings for Critical Fires. This can affect overall results and care is required with interpretation. It will be noted that we count as failure even one second outside the target. Incidents on a particular station ground may be attended by fire stations from other stations.

Response times can and do vary from incident to incident according to prevailing conditions, availability of the local crew, and accuracy of addressing, spate conditions etc.

Simple geography in terms of distance from the fire station availability of the local retained fire station crew, traffic conditions and weather can have a significant impact upon response times. Recruitment is essential in support of maintaining response times performance in West Sussex.

All reasons for attendance time failures are investigated by operational staff 'on the ground' and where appropriate are freely discussed with members. To understand reasons for attendance time failure, each incident must be, and is, scrutinised in details including the time taken to answer the call, prevailing conditions at the time of the call (e.g. traffic, weather); availability of appliances both in the immediate area and surrounding areas; ongoing incidents drawing resources.

Recent reviews of WSFRS

- (1) Emergency Standards – passed by members and independently audited by Risktec in 2007 – to assure methodology and risk approaches.
- (2) Fire Redesign and Future Fire and Rescue Service – In 2010 and 2015 Risktec Ltd carried out additional independent reviews of the Fire redesign and future Fire and Rescue (FFR) Proposals for West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service The audit assures data, methodology and risk approaches.
- (3) Future Fire and Rescues Service - Statement of assurance (County Council audit).
- (4) Internal Audit of CRMP commissioned by the Environmental and Community Services Select Committee carried out in December 2016 – Substantial Assurance was given).
- (5) 'After the Incident' - Satisfaction rates of customers (99%) as quoted in West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service Annual report and Statement of Assurance 2015/16.

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