

West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service in Crisis

Your Help Needed

The shocking reality of inadequate West Sussex County Council protection

1975

To protect **641,600** residents
Incidents attended - **5,081**

WSCC's maximum provision of
frontline fire engines & crews



TODAY

To protect **806,900+** residents (Up **26%**)
Incidents attended – **8,842** in 2016/17 (Up **74%**)

WSCC's maximum provision of
frontline fire engines & crews



WSCC crewing sometimes means
only these fire engines are available



Revised Integrated Risk Management Plan 2018-22

The County Council is currently consulting the public on the service's [Integrated Risk Management Plan](#) (IRMP). The [consultation](#), which closes on 28 May 2018, can be found on the WSCC website, but the carefully worded consultation questions disguise the cuts hidden in the 84 page plan.

County Councillor [Daniel Purchase](#), "there is potential for some serious cuts that the public might easily miss".

Serving and retired firefighters agree, and we recommend answering no to questions 1 to 5 for the following reasons:



Question 1 – crewing fire engines with fewer firefighters cannot reduce the consequences of incidents, as claimed, and it is less safe for the public and firefighters. Fire alarm calls must be responded to and generous response times must be reduced, not increased.

Question 4 – the focus should be on providing more firefighters to fill crewing gaps. Retained Firefighters must be better rewarded and valued to ensure that crews are always available around the clock.

Question 2 – the proposals will divert fire service resources to help other departments and organisations meet their obligations, whilst undermining the fire service's statutory duty to provide effective enforcement of fire safety legislation and an effective response to emergencies.

Question 5 – Since 2010, WSCC has not been providing a value for money fire & rescue service, it has been providing a slightly cheaper, but much less effective service. This plan will make a poor service even worse. People don't want value when it comes to life saving services, they want a quality service that responds quickly and effectively when they are in trouble.

Question 3 – This hides the potential for cuts and will reduce effectiveness. It also opens the door to more expensive failures, like the joint mobilising system with East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service, which is five years overdue. We don't know how expensive, as they refuse to tell us.

Question 6 – your opportunity to tell the County Council that you want the priorities to be:

- No more fire engine or firefighter cuts.
- Fire engines to normally be crewed by five firefighters, with an absolute minimum of four.
- At least 30 fire engines available around the clock.
- No reduction in response standards.
- Fire alarm calls to be attended and treated as potential fires.

For a more detailed explanation visit wsfrscuts.blogspot.com

The County Council may say:

The number of incidents is falling.

But there are more incidents now than in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and most of the 1980s, when there were many more fire crews available. The number of incidents each year is now rising again, as shown on the right.

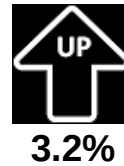
We are trying to improve the crewing situation

In response to concerns about the closure of Findon fire station, in 2010, we were told that "WSFRS was working to improve the availability of the second pump at Storrington".

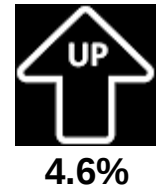
People were reassured in 2010, that when Keymer fire station closed, it would be well covered by Hurstpierpoint and Burgess Hill

Latest official statistics from WSCC & the Home Office say otherwise

2014-15
to
2016-17



11 months to
February 2018
v
11 months to
February 2017



So why, in 2015, when former Conservative Councillor Andy Petch asked the County Council to set up a special group to look at the serious problem of poor crewing levels, did they not do so?

Instead of doing so, in 2014, the second pump was removed from Storrington. The remaining fire engine, which was available for 99.5% of the time, is now only available for 20% of the time!

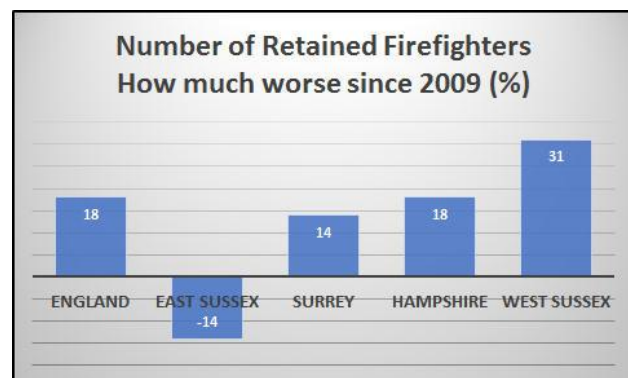
Hurstpierpoint, which was available 90% of the time, is currently almost completely unavailable (0.7%), and Burgess Hill, which had availability for their two fire engines of 100% and 75%, now has availability of just 78% and 35%.

What is East Sussex doing right and West Sussex doing wrong?

The problem of recruiting and retaining part-time (Retained) firefighters is a national one, related to social and economic change.

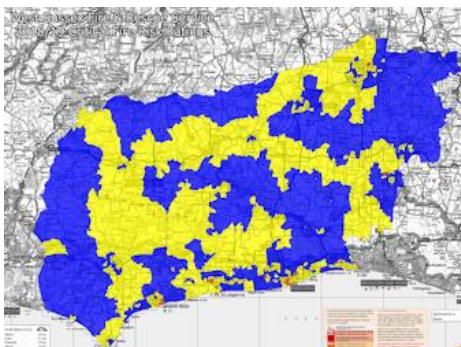
But if that is true, why is West Sussex worse than the national average and worse than neighbouring fire & rescue services?

East Sussex has similar geography and similar pressures, but has increased the number of retained firefighters by 14%, whilst they have fallen by 31% in West Sussex.



Waiting ever longer for help to arrive

Generous response time targets are not met in West Sussex far too often. **Most of the county has targets of 12 or 14 minutes** for the first fire engine to arrive, but in **Hampshire it is 8 minutes** for the whole county and in **Surrey it is 10 minutes**. Fires don't burn any slower in West Sussex, so longer West Sussex response times cannot be justified.



Critical Fire Risk Areas

In the yellow areas

It took **more than 12 minutes** for help to arrive at 11% of calls.

It took **more than 15 minutes** for the vital second fire engine to arrive at 17% of calls

In the blue areas

It took **more than 14 minutes** for help to arrive at 8% of calls.

It took **more than 17 minutes** for the vital second fire engine to arrive at 16% of calls

Why crews of 5 make more sense than crews of 4

Minimum number of firefighters required for safe and effective action*

Car fire – 5 firefighters

Building fire – 9 firefighters

Number of fire engines needed

With crew of 5



With crew of 4



* = number determined by West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service after detailed task analysis