

# ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

## Essex County Fire & Rescue Service



### ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AUTHORITY HELD ON WEDNESDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2009 AT 10:00 HOURS

#### Present:

Councillor B Aspinell	Councillor M Miller
Councillor S Barker	Councillor D W Morris
Councillor K Bentley	Councillor R Pearson
Councillor R Callender	Councillor J Reeves
Councillor A E Holland (Vice-Chairman)	Councillor C Riley
Councillor E Johnson	Councillor J Roberts
Councillor C Kent	Councillor M Skeels
Councillor J Knapman	Councillor T C Smith-Hughes
Councillor G McEwen	Councillor A Turrell
	Councillor E Webster

The following Officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

Chief Fire Officer David Johnson  
Finance Director & Treasurer, Mike Clayton  
Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Adam Eckley  
Director of HR & Workforce Planning, Richard Hopper  
Assistant Chief Fire Officer Gordon Hunter  
Clerk & Monitoring Officer, Philip Thompson

#### **55. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTION NOTICES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Channer, Harrison, Hedley (Chairman), Walters, Wexham and White.

The Chairman was not able to attend the meeting due to illness. Councillor McEwen put forward that the Authority send him best wishes. The Vice-Chairman chaired the meeting in the absence of Councillor Hedley.

Members were advised that Councillor Kent had telephoned to say that she would be delayed due to traffic problems. Since the Authority was not quorate without Thurrock Council's representation, decision items were considered following Councillor Kent's arrival from item 67.

#### **56. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Vice-Chairman declared a personal interest in items 59 and 68 in respect of her appointment as Director of the Regional Control Centre Company.

## **57. MINUTES**

The Authority received the minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2009.

The minutes were amended for accuracy and signed by the Chairman.

Amendment:

Minute no. 41 Membership of Sub Committees and Dates of Future Meetings

Community Command Liaison Members - Uttlesford & Braintree

Delete "*Councillor S M Walsh*", insert "*Councillor S Barker*"

## **58. POLICY AND STRATEGY COMMITTEE- MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 JULY 2009**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2009 were received.

## **59. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER**

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/088/09 presented the Corporate Risk Register. The Vice-Chairman thanked SDO Fleming and Mr Thomas for their work on the Risk Management Committee. Councillor Turrell and Councillor Smith-Hughes highlighted difficulties in viewing colour coding within the report. Councillor Turrell asked for confirmation that the Service was doing all it could to improve areas of risk in order to move them into the 'green'. SDO Fleming advised that risks were managed through action plans and migrated where possible, the Chief Fire Officer added that a number of risks were not within the Service's influence. Councillor Smith-Hughes was of the view that at the next review it would be helpful to see movement in the risk level numbers, in order to monitor if there had been any change in a risk level within its colour zone. The Vice-Chairman assured Members that the risk register was subject to challenge and monitoring by the Risk Management Committee before presentation to the Authority.

**Resolved:**

That Members of the Authority noted the Corporate Risk Register.

## **60. CORPORATE BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND RECOVERY PLAN**

Report EFA/089/09 by the Chief Fire Officer advised the Authority of the reviewed Corporate Business Continuity Plan.

**Resolved:**

That Members noted the revised Corporate Business Continuity and Recovery Plan

## **61. CORPORATE INFLUENZA PANDEMIC (BUSINESS CONTINUITY) PLAN**

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/090/09 introduced the Service's Influenza Pandemic (Business Continuity) Plan.

Councillor Barker enquired if the Service had made an application for fire crews to be considered an “at risk group” in order that they would be included in the Government’s scheme to receive priority inoculation. ACFO Hunter advised that the Essex Resilience Forum had, subject to available resources, preventative measures against influenza under control. The Chief Fire Officer added that the Government had plans for key workers to be protected by inoculation. Councillor Knapman asked at what number of employees affected by influenza, would the situation become critical. SDO Fleming said that there was no specific figure; it was subject to variation. ACFO Hunter further advised that during a peak week of influenza it was projected that 45% of Service employees would be available to work; Operation GIAN would determine the configuration of front-line staff for service delivery.

**Resolved:**

That Members noted the ECFRS Corporate Influenza Pandemic (Business Continuity) Plan.

**62. HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT**

The Health & Safety Annual report was presented to the Authority in Chief Fire Officer’s report EFA/091/09. Councillor Smith-Hughes noted that the report was a good news story that the Service was driving down accidents. In response to a request by Councillor Smith-Hughes it was agreed that the tables on page 24 of the Annual Report would be examined against the figures.

Councillor Barker was of the view that it was apparent employees were adequately insured against injury, she enquired as to the level of insurance for members of the public. The Finance Director & Treasurer advised that the Authority was indemnified for £50m of employer’s liability insurance and public liability also of £50m.

The Chief Fire Officer thanked Councillor Pearson for his contribution to Health & Safety.

**Resolved:**

That Members noted the contents of the report.

**63. COUNTY WIDE REVIEW**

The County Wide Review 2009-10 contained in Chief Fire Officer’s report EFA/092/09 assessed the impact that current and future developments would have on the County’s community risk profile. Councillor Smith-Hughes’ view was that it was a very useful document. The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that the Review formed a basis for identifying future plans. Councillor McEwen suggested that it would be useful to have a concise summary of the document; Councillor Barker proposed that a group comprising three Members of the Challenge & Innovation and Officers meet to précis the document, Councillor Aspinell expressed interest in being a member of that group.

It was agreed that a hard copy of the County Wide Review 2009-10 would be available in the Members’ Room at Kelvedon Park

**Resolved:**

That Members noted the contents of the report.

#### **64. OPERATIONAL INCIDENTS REPORT APRIL TO JUNE 2009**

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/093/09 provided Members with information on the number and type of operational incidents that the Service had attended from April to June 2009.

Councillor Morris referred to the special services subsection - removal of objects from the person, ACFO Hunter gave examples of this type of call.

Councillor Smith-Hughes noted the reduction in hoax calls in the year to date 2009-10, the Chief Fire Officer advised caller challenge by Control staff was having an effect. The Committee acknowledged that FireBreak, Young Firefighter schemes and partnership working all impacted on the statistics' downward trend although it was not possible to pin down directly the link between community fire safety and call rates.

In response to Councillor Reeves' enquiry regarding the fatal road traffic collision referenced in the report, ACFO Hunter advised that the investigation was ongoing, he would update her on completion of the investigation.

#### **Resolved:**

That Members noted the contents of the report.

#### **65. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME - PROGRESS REPORT**

The Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/094/09 provided Authority members with a summary of the considerable progress made in IT Transformation since the initial Strategic IT Effectiveness review work commenced in March 2008.

Councillor Knapman enquired about December 2009 targets. ACFO Eckley said that he anticipated that the vast majority would be on time and on target with the IT Effectiveness Scorecard. Councillor Bentley asked which business applications caused the scorecard to be in the red. ACFO Eckley advised that being in the red was more about capability testing on platforms which took a period of time, and that the applications were not risk critical.

Councillor Smith-Hughes commented that significant progress had been made, he suggested that the next report came to the Authority in December 2010, with the Policy & Strategy Committee monitoring and seeing how things moved ahead in the interim. Councillor Smith-Hughes referred to the significant financial benefits forecast if the ICT Strategy were to be delivered in its entirety; he suggested that in due course Members receive information about savings. ACFO Eckley advised the Authority of the decision of the Policy & Strategy Committee, that to facilitate greater scrutiny Members' approval was required for ICT Project expenditure over a £250k threshold.

#### **Resolved;**

That Members noted the contents of the report

## **66. REPORT TO CONSTITUENT AUTHORITIES**

### **Resolved:**

That the following items comprise the report to the Constituent Authorities:

- Operational Incidents Report
- Reference to the electronic address of the:
  - Health & Safety Annual Report
  - County Wide Review

## **67. MEMBERSHIP**

Report EFA/083/09 by the Chief Fire Officer advised Members that Thurrock Council had appointed Councillor Kent to the Fire Authority as a replacement for Councillor MacPherson.

### **Resolved:**

That Members:

1. Noted the change in membership of the Fire Authority
2. Agreed the appointment of Councillor Kent to the Challenge and Innovation Committee
3. Agreed that Councillor Harrison and Councillor Kent would confer and then advise the Monitoring Officer of Thurrock Council's representative to the Joint Standards Committee
4. Appointed Councillor Roberts to the Audit and Review Committee
5. Noted that the Constitution Book will be revised to reflect the changes

## **68. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES**

Report EFA/084/09 by the Finance Director & Treasurer recommended an addition to the Members' Allowance Scheme, that additional allowances would be paid to a Member who acted as Chairman of the East of England Regional Control Centre Ltd (EERCC) and to any other Member who acted as a Director of the Company.

Councillor Smith-Hughes said that from his knowledge those Members who acted as EERCC directors had a significant workload, he said that the Authority's representatives fought hard for the Authority's interests, and where necessary had taken a robust stance, that recently the Chairman and Vice-Chairman had resisted great pressure from the CLG to sign the lease of the RCC building. He added that as directors of the EERCC Members had to represent that company but were also representative of the people who appointed them.

The Vice-Chairman confirmed that at the last RCC meeting the signing of the lease had been delayed for a year.

In response to Councillor Aspinell's enquiry the Finance Director & Treasurer advised that the Authority was a member of EERCC, a limited company, that there was no significant liability for the Authority.

Councillor Knapman was of the view that it was reasonable to pay allowances to those members acting as directors of the company in order to have the robust stance.

Councillor Morris reiterated his own earlier views, that the Regional Control Centre was a waste of money and a complete fiasco. He was of the opinion that the Authority should fight its cause and make sure that RCC did not happen.

**Resolved:**

That Members agreed

1. An addition to the scheme of Members' Allowances be approved to come into effect from 1 April 2009
2. An additional allowance of £2,050 be paid to a Member who acted as Chairman of the East of England Regional Control Centre Ltd and £1,025 per annum for any other Member who acted as a Director of the Company.

**69. RISK COMPENDIUM, POLICY, STRATEGY AND GUIDANCE**

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/085/09 asked Members to adopt the Risk Compendium, Policy, Strategy and Guidance as the primary risk management document for the Authority.

**Resolved:**

That Members adopted the "Risk Compendium, Policy, Strategy and Guidance" as the primary risk management document for the Authority.

**70. POSITIVE CREWING REQUIREMENTS (PCR) AND STRATEGIC CREWING RESERVE**

Members considered Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/086/09 regarding a proposed new business model for crewing appliances and meeting resourcing demands.

Councillor Johnson asked how the new model would not reduce the overall number of firefighters, the Chief Fire Officer advised that the current number of posts would remain funded. Councillor Knapman enquired if since 2003 when the FBU's overtime ban was lifted, firefighters could earn overtime money. The Chief Fire Officer advised that firefighters could earn extra money however overtime was not compulsory. In response to Councillor Kent's enquiry regarding potential job losses, the Chief Fire Officer confirmed that there would not be any. Councillor Bentley asked if funding vacant posts would close down recruitment, the Chief Fire Officer advised that the Service would continue to recruit when necessary.

Councillor Bentley drew attention to the Colchester area, he said that Colchester's population was increasing and that therefore there would be more fire risk in the area. The Chief Fire Officer expressed a view that Colchester Fire Station was in an outdated location and that it would be better to have two new fire stations. The Chief Fire Officer restated that the proposed business model did not reduce firefighter numbers but would ensure the correct number available at all times. In response to an enquiry that it would be achieved through unfilled posts, the Chief Fire Officer agreed that yes in effect that was the how it would be attained. ACFO Hunter agreed with Councillor Bentley that Essex was effectively expanding all the time; he said that increasing the availability at all times would make better use of finite resources. Councillor Smith-Hughes asked if employees in the strategic reserve would have access to training etc. The Chief Fire Officer said that firefighters would be attached to stations and receive training as now. Councillor Aspinell enquired about the bare minimum establishment, he asked if it was right for Essex to function with the bare

minimum. The Chief Fire Officer advised that the new resourcing model was not the bare minimum but the universally accepted five and four crewed pumps.

Councillor Knapman was of the opinion that a more imaginative and flexible model to employ firefighters more efficiently was the way forward.

The Chief Fire Officer referred to the County Wide Review and the changing needs of the community, that the revenue support grant which formed 50% of the Authority's funding was determined on factors such as population, deprivation and the coastline but did not fluctuate according to risk, he said that there was a requirement for the Service to make the best of what it had. The Chief Fire Officer said that the preferred crewing option was five and four and that the proposed business model was the best method for that. ACFO Hunter referred to increasing operational capability and gave the examples of flooding and the Olympics 2012, he said that it was a case of getting the best out of resources.

Councillor Bentley suggested that the Authority receive quarterly updates regarding progress of the new business model. The Chief Fire Officer advised an interval before updates commenced.

**Resolved:**

That Members agreed:

1. To introduce the Positive Crewing Requirement and Strategic Crewing Reserve model.
2. That quarterly updates that should be brought to the Authority on progress.

**71. KELVEDON PARK DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME- PROGRESS REPORT 1**

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/087/09 provided Members with an update on the progress of the Kelvedon Park Development programme. Further the Chief Fire Officer advised Members that due to delay in the implementation of the regional control centre, a report to the next Policy & Strategy Committee would set out a scoping study for Control to vacate the Hutton site and move to Kelvedon Park. The Chief Fire Officer advised that an application would be made to the CLG for funding under New Burdens' Principles. A report of the proposals would be brought to a future Authority meeting for approval. Councillor Morris said that he was completely opposed to the Regional Control Centre and that he looking forward to having a new control room at Kelvedon Park. The Vice-Chairman thanked Jon Doherty, Property Services Manager and his team for the Kelvedon Park project work.

**Resolved:**

That Members:

1. Noted the contents of the report
2. Agreed that the Authority to approve the design to extend the existing office accommodation at Kelvedon Park be delegated to the Chief Fire Officer, following consultation with Lead Members.

**72. OTHER PART 1 BUSINESS**

**Attendance at Meetings**

Councillor Barker said that she was very disappointed with Members' attendance at meetings. Regardless of traffic problems she said that if a Member could not attend a meeting they should put forward a substitute. Councillor Barker proposed that the Authority's attendance be reported annually. Councillor Pearson seconded the proposal.

**73. OTHER PART 2 BUSINESS**

**Industrial Action**

The Chief Fire Officer updated Members regarding Industrial Action.

Signed .....  
Chairman, 9 December 2009

