

ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Essex County Fire & Rescue Service



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

Present:

Councillor B Aspinell	Councillor R Pearson
Councillor S Barker	Councillor J Reeves
Councillor P Channer	Councillor C Riley
Councillor I Harrison	Councillor J Roberts
Councillor A Hedley (Chairman)	Councillor M Skeels
Councillor A E Holland (Vice-Chairman)	Councillor T C Smith-Hughes
Councillor E Johnson	Councillor A Turrell
Councillor C Kent	Councillor R Walters
Councillor J Knapman	Councillor E Webster
Councillor G McEwen	Councillor D White
Councillor M Miller	

The following Officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

Deputy Chief Fire Officer Mark Jones
Finance Director & Treasurer, Mike Clayton
Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Adam Eckley
Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Stewart Thomson
Director of HR & Workforce Planning, Richard Hopper
T/Assistant Chief Fire Officer Mark Hardingham
Clerk & Monitoring Officer, Philip Thompson
Jon Barber, Audit Commission
Ian Davidson, Audit Commission
Minute Taker, Trisha Adams

74. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTION NOTICES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bentley, Callender, Morris and Wexham.

75. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by members in respect of items included on the agenda.

76. MINUTES

The Authority received the minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2009.

Resolved:

That the minutes be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

77. POLICY & STRATEGY COMMITTEE - MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 23 SEPTEMBER AND 11 NOVEMBER 2009

The minutes of the meetings held on 23 September and 11 November 2009 were received.

78. CHALLENGE & INNOVATION COMMITTEE - MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 22 SEPTEMBER AND 11 NOVEMBER 2009

The minutes of the meetings held on 22 September and 11 November 2009 were received.

79. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Pearson to the meeting; Councillor Pearson had recently had an operation in hospital.

The Chairman sent the Authority's best wishes to the Chief Fire Officer and ACFO Hunter who were not able to attend the meeting as they had both recently undergone hospital operations.

The Chairman referred to DCFO Mark Jones appointment as Chief Fire Officer, Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service.

The Chairman said that it had been a real pleasure to work with Mark who four years previously had joined Essex at his second attempt. Originally from the Moray area of northern Scotland, Mark joined Grampian Fire Brigade in 1985. He had served in a number of operational firefighting and command roles and was seconded to the Scottish Fire Service Training School in 1989 and Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate for Scotland in 2001. The Chairman advised that Mark represents Scotland in the United Nations (International Strategy for Disaster Reduction) Global Wildfire network, and chairs the International Firefighters Association Forest Fires Commission.

On presentation of a gift from the Authority the Chairman said that Essex' loss was Buckinghamshire's gain. On behalf of the Liberal Democrat group Councillor Smith-Hughes thanked Mark for all he had done for the Authority and the Service.

DCFO Mark Jones said that he was pleased to have made the decision four years ago to reapply to Essex. Mark said that he had very much enjoyed working for the Authority and had always found Members to be good humoured but challenging as was their role, he thanked them and said that he would always have good memories of working in Essex.

The Chairman advised Members of the following:

3 September 2009 – LGA Equality & Diversity Champions

6 October 2009 – Equality & Diversity Peer Assessment

The Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Group Spokesperson had attended a meeting as part of the Peer Review. The Authority achieved level 3, the Chairman said well done to the Equalities team.

Appointment to the Fire Prevention Association Council

The Chairman advised that the Fire Services Management Committee had agreed to his appointment as representative of the LGA on the Fire Prevention Association Council.

16 September 2009 – Business Breakfast

A small business breakfast for delegates of the Federation of Small Businesses.

11 November 2009

A Remembrance Day ceremony at Kelvedon Park

18 September 2009 – Meeting with Shona Dunn, Director Fire & Resilience CLG

The Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Group Spokesperson and members of the Strategic Management Board had an informative meeting with Shona Dunn.

30 September 2009 - Workplace Fire Safety Conference

The Chairman had delivered a lecture to Officers about fixed fire protection

30 September 2009 – Charity Golf Day

In conjunction with the Police Authority, the above day raised several hundred pounds

Casualty Reduction Board Meetings

The Chairman attended the above.

Briefings about Fire Service Modernisation

The Chairman advised Members of the above meetings attended by Councillors representing Essex County Council, Thurrock Council and Southend Borough Council.

4 November 2009 - Managing Strategic Performance Conference

The Chairman had attended the conference.

1 December 2009 – Opening of Rayleigh Weir

The Chairman advised that there was discussion regarding naming a room at the above the 'Essex Ford Suite'. It had been suggested that there would be another opportunity for Members to visit the newly opened Rayleigh Weir Community Fire Station at a breakfast meeting.

Chairman's Charity Dinner 2009

The Chairman had presented the Burned Children's Club with a cheque for over £5,800, funds were raised at the Chairman's Charity Dinner at Stock Brook Manor in June.

FireBreak Pass Outs

The Chairman had recently attended FireBreak pass out parades in Corringham, Basildon, Maldon and Harlow.

Members' Development Opportunities 2009/10 Questionnaire

The Chairman asked Members to complete the above questionnaire and return it to Democratic Services, he said that it was a valuable opportunity for Members to advise what they wanted so that Officers could design programmes to suit their training requirements.

10 December 2009 – Essex County Fire & Rescue Carol Service

The Chairman advised Members that the above would be held the next day in Chelmsford Cathedral.

Chairman's Charity Dinner 2010

The Chairman advised that the date and venue of the next year's charity dinner for Extra 21 Downs Syndrome would be promulgated to Members in January 2010.

80. ATTENDANCE AT CONFERENCES

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/118/09 sought Members' approval for a number of members of the Authority to attend at a range of national events appearing regularly on the Fire & Rescue Service calendar annually.

The Chairman was of the view that the LGA annual conference was not particularly fire oriented and that there was no particular need to attend each year. The Vice-Chairman advised that the two Lead Members of the Risk Management Committee needed to attend the ALARM conference as part of their training.

Resolved:

That Members approved that:

1. The Chairman, Vice-Chairman and group spokesperson (or their substitutes) attend the LGA Fire Conference in 2010.
2. The two members of the Risk Management committee attend the Risk Management conference 2010
3. Authority be delegated to the Chief Fire Officer in consultation with the Chairman of Essex Fire Authority, to approve the attendance at conference, seminar or any other activity, on those occasions where it has not been the subject of a specific report to the Authority or one of its committees.

81. JOINT STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Clerk & Monitoring Officer's report EFA/119/09 advised the Authority of the regulations to govern the establishment and constitution of joint Standards Committees, (Standards Committee (Further Provisions) (England) Regulations 2009 (SI 2009/1255)).

Councillor Smith-Hughes said that at last the Joint Standards Committee with Essex County Council was formal. Councillor Smith-Hughes asked if there was a moral or legal obligation on Authority representatives to attend meetings and training when in practical terms there was unlikely to be great linkage with the Fire Authority. The Monitoring Officer advised that there was no legal obligation to attend but that it was important in order that Fire Authority Members were trained so that they would be able to deal with a complaint about misconduct if necessary, he advised that the procedure was quasi judicial and it was important that Standard Committee Members kept up to speed. The Monitoring Officer said that he was pleased to say that since he had taken on his role at the Fire Authority there had not been any complaint against a Member

Councillor Aspinell asked if there was provision for substitute Members, Councillor Barker responded that there was no requirement as there were sufficient people on the Committee to meet requirements.

Resolved:

That:

1. The Monitoring Officer advise all Members of the new grounds for application for a dispensation.
2. The Fire Authority establish a Joint Standards Committee with Essex County Council.
3. The necessary changes to the Constitution of the Fire Authority (attached as Appendix A) be approved.
4. Councillor Harrison be appointed to the Joint Standards Committee as Essex Fire Authority's representative of Thurrock Council.

82. ORGANISATIONAL ASSESSMENT

The Chairman advised that the information contained in Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/126/09 was no longer embargoed by the Audit Commission and could be brought into part I of the meeting. Ian Davidson and Jon Barber from the Audit Commission were at the meeting to present data relating to the Authority's overall score of level 3 'Performing well'. Mr Barber advised Members that the assessment had been carried out prior to October 2009 when the Authority had progressed to level 3 of the Equality Standard, the improved score would be taken into consideration at the next assessment. Councillor Roberts said that attaining level 3 of the Equality Standard was positive news. Councillor Barker queried whether the Equality Standard evaluation should state whether an Authority was bad, good or excellent, the Director of Workforce Development advised that Essex had been assessed under the previous framework. Mr Davidson congratulated the Authority on its overall score.

Mr Davidson thanked DCFO Jones for his working relationship with the Audit Commission. Mr Barber added that DCFO Jones had always given robust but witty challenges, that DCFO Jones would be missed. DCFO Jones thanked Mr Barber and Mr Davidson, he said that they had always worked very diligently with the Service.

DCFO Jones said that the next assessment would be a more difficult test with a significant step down in scores, he said that the Service was not complacent, that it was morally right to continue to improve despite funding pressures and restrictions. The Service would monitor funding streams and the effect of variances. DCFO Jones said that the Service always explored emerging ideas and would come back to the Authority for comment. The Service aspired to be 'in front'.

Councillor Roberts emphasised the Authority's work with young people, he commended FireBreak as an excellent scheme and asked that the minutes record the Authority's thanks to the uniformed staff involved.

Councillor Smith-Hughes asked if the Audit Commission had revised the pre publication version of the Essex' Organisational Assessment. Mr Davidson advised that the wording had been changed slightly but that the messages had not changed.

The Chairman thanked Mr Davidson and Mr Barber for their presentation. The Chairman said that there was no room for complacency and that he was looking forward to improvement.

Resolved:

That Members noted the contents of the report.

83. PROVISIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT SETTLEMENT 2010-11

Report EFA/120/09 by the Chief Fire Officer informed Members about the announcement of the Government's provisional grant settlement proposals for the following year. The figures were the same as those previously indicated as part of the Government's three year spending review period and showed an increase for 2010/11 of 2.6% on 2009/10. Councillor Smith-Hughes said that prior to the announcement it had not been quite clear if the Government would honour the third year of the period, it was therefore a relief and 2010/11 would be that much easier, however thereafter it could be anticipated that it would be particularly difficult. DCFO Jones said that there was prospect of a more savage funding decrease in 2011/12.

Resolved:

That Members of the Essex Fire Authority noted the report.

84. KELVEDON PARK DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER PROPERTY RELATED UPDATES

The Authority received Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/121/09 which provided an update relating to the further development of Kelvedon Park and other property related matters.

ACFO Eckley advised Members of a meeting of the Kelvedon Programme Development Board the day before, at that meeting it had been decided that Members would receive briefings of specific developments in relation to the project. ACFO Eckley said that approval had been received for Kelvedon Park's secondary access; all aspects of its construction were to be explored with other agencies. Referring to marketing of the Hutton site, ACFO Eckley advised that Brentwood District Council had been notified of the intention to sell and would consider the land's future development, work was ongoing.

The Chairman said that it had been important to bring the report to the Committee rather than relying on communication by e-mail, he said it allowed those who opposed decisions regarding the project to ask questions.

Councillor Reeves asked if there had been any discussions with Castle Point Borough Council regarding regeneration of the Hadleigh site. ACFO Eckley advised that the Fire Authority had been in conversation with local planners and the leader at Castle Point Council, discussions were continuing. ACFO Eckley added that the true market value of the site had yet to be identified, that the Authority was under a duty to achieve best value.

In his capacity as County Councillor for the Hutton area, Councillor Roberts enquired if it was likely that the Fire Authority would vacate the Hutton site within two years. ACFO Eckley advised that the Service was looking to relocate administrative functions by summer 2010, with the control room remaining at Hutton pending decisions relating to regional FiReControl. ACFO Eckley said that an option being explored was a sell and lease back arrangement, that the sale was in the hands of the market and interested parties.

Resolved:

That Members noted that at the meeting held on 11 November 2009 the Policy and Strategy Committee:

1. Approved that the plans for the further Development of Kelvedon Park are placed on hold whilst clarity is achieved in relation to the future financial position of public sector bodies.

2. Approved that all necessary steps are taken to expedite the vacation of the Hutton site, utilising wherever possible existing property within the current property portfolio.
3. Agreed that, once the Hutton site has been entirely vacated by ECFRS staff, it is surplus to requirements of Essex Fire Authority.
4. Approved the disposal of the Hutton site.
5. Approved that authority is delegated to the Chief Fire Officer, in consultation with the Chairman of Essex Fire Authority, to exercise the most economically advantageous option following consideration of both short term letting options and the longer term disposal option.
6. Agreed that Hadleigh fire station is surplus to requirements.
7. Approved the disposal of the Hadleigh fire station site.
8. Agreed that Rayleigh fire station is surplus to requirements.
9. Approved the disposal of the Rayleigh fire station site.
10. Approved that authority is delegated to the Chief Fire Officer, in consultation with the Chairman of Essex Fire Authority, to exercise the most economically advantageous option following consideration of disposal options.

85. INCIDENT RECORDING SYSTEM (IRS) UPDATE

Report EFA/122/099 by the Chief Fire Officer informed Members of the progress made with implementation of the new electronic Incident Recording System (IRS) and its impact following six months of continued operational use.

Resolved:

That Members noted the content of the paper.

86. DAY CREWING REVIEW

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/123/09 informed Members of recent changes that had been made to the contractual arrangements of firefighters and supervisory managers conditioned to the day crewing shift system at Great Baddow, South Woodham Ferrers, Dovercourt and Waltham Abbey fire stations.

In response to Councillor Barker's enquiry ACFO Hardingham advised the following:

1. Positive hours have now been increased from 22.5 to 27 per week
2. The stations are now autonomous - this means that where previously they would have required firefighters from other stations to cover shortfalls this will now be managed within the station on most occasions.
3. Day crew staff will now be expected to provide cover for shortfalls at other fire stations on their weekend day shifts when they would otherwise be on stand by from their home address. This has not previously been the case.
4. Day crew staff have not traditionally been tasked with additional responsibilities beyond their firefighting role. There is now an expectation that they will undertake specialist roles, an example of this is the Animal Rescue Unit that is soon to be located at South Woodham Ferrers day crew station.

Resolved;

That Members noted the contents of the report.

87. REPORT TO CONSTITUENT AUTHORITIES

Resolved:

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

- Joint Standards Committee
- Organisational Assessment

88. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

That the public (including the Press) be excluded from the meeting during consideration of minute no. 89 on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as specified in paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

89. EFA TRADING – FUTURE MANAGERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Report EFA/125/09 by the Chief Fire Officer advised Member of changes to the management of the Authority's trading activities.

Councillor Roberts referred to his years as Chairman of EFA (Trading) and thanked DCFO Jones for his great help with the company and great contribution.

Councillor Barker, the Chairman of EFA (Trading) agreed that as the shareholder of the company the report's recommendations were a decision for the Fire Authority.

In answer to Councillor Robert's enquiry DCFO Jones advised that there would be consultation with EFA (Trading) staff regarding the changes.

Resolved:

That Members:

1. Noted the changes to the management of trading activities;
2. Appointed ACFO Adam Eckley (Director of Assets and Resources) and Richard Hopper (Director of Work Force Development) as type B Directors of the company in place of DCFO Mark Jones and ACFO Stewart Thomson; and
3. Ask the Board of EFA (Trading) to review the requirements for number and role of Directors of the company in 2010.

Signed

Chairman, 10 February 2010

