

ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND STRATEGY COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 19 MAY 2010 AT 10:00 HOURS

Present:

Councillor A M Hedley (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs A E Holland (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor D W Morris
Councillor R Pearson
Councillor T C Smith-Hughes
Councillor E Webster

The following Officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

Chief Fire Officer D Johnson
Deputy Chief Fire Officer A Eckley
Deputy Chief Fire Officer G Hunter
Finance Director & Treasurer M Clayton
Director Workforce Development, R Hopper
Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Stewart Thomson
Deputy Clerk and Monitoring Officer, R Curtis
Minute Taker, T Adams

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bentley, Callender, Harrison and Turrell.

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman declared a personal interest in items 16 and 22 in respect of their appointment by the Fire Authority as Directors of the Regional Control Centre Company.

13. MINUTES

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2010.

Resolved:

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

14. PROVISIONAL FINANCE OUTTURN 2009/10

Report EFA/050/10 by the Chief Fire Officer reported on the forecast outturn position for the year 2009/10 and identified the major variances to the budget for the year.

Councillor Smith-Hughes said that it was very helpful to see that the Authority was significantly under budget and the changes since the March 2010 forecast, that he was very happy with the recommendations.

Referring to staffing Councillor Smith-Hughes asked about the savings brought about by a reduction in support staff. The Director Workforce Development advised that there was a downward pressure on support staff. The Finance Director & Treasurer advised that every support staff vacancy required a business case before recruitment, he said that there were savings across departments. The Director Workforce Development added that there had been significant restructure of IT and Finance roles and the employment of temporary staff allowed greater flexibility. Councillor Smith-Hughes said that it was important to note that the pressures were wide-ranging across the Service.

Resolved:

That Members

1. Noted the report; and
2. Agreed to increase the 2010/11 capital expenditure budget by £107k to reflect the carry over of expenditure from 2009/10

15. ECFRS INCIDENT GROUND SYSTEM - BUSINESS CASE

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/051/10 contained the business case for the Incident Grounds Systems project. The Chairman said that it was a good technical piece of work and he was fully supportive of initiation of the project. The Chief Fire Officer said that it was the most important investment in Incident Command for the health and safety of the front-line personnel. The Chairman's view was that it was incumbent on the Authority to make available the best resources.

Councillor Smith-Hughes referred to the table on page 2 of the report which highlighted the number of firefighter hours spent at larger incidents; he said that although there was no financial benefit, there would be safety benefits in implementing the project. Further that since finance was included in the ICT strategy the Authority should go ahead.

Councillor Pearson said that from his perspective as Lead Member, Health & Safety the report set out a good case, he recommended implementation of the project.

Resolved:

That Members:

1. Noted that the Incident Ground Systems project was fully aligned with the ICT Strategy approved by the committee in July 2009 (EFA/072/09 referred) and
2. Approved the initiation of the project for the development of Incident Ground Systems based on Option 2 - Incident Ground Systems implementation to include Vector Command, Command support Software; Wireless Incident Ground Camera Systems, HQ-based Operations Suite; Training Solution; interface to information provided to Mobile Data Terminals, in particular Site Specific Risk Information.

16. RESCHEDULING OF THE MIDDLEWARE PROJECT

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/052/10 sought alteration to the current ECFRS IT strategy and in so doing allowing work to commence on the Enterprise Application Integration Middleware project.

The Vice-Chairman said that she was very pleased that Essex was leading and that nationally there was a lot of interest. The Vice-Chairman was pleased to have received RIEP funding. Councillor Smith-Hughes asked how assured the Service could be regards funding from the CLG. ACFO Thomson advised that as far as the Service could know the funds were guaranteed. Councillor Smith-Hughes advised that there were financial and practical benefits to progression of the project.

Resolved:

That Members:

- 1 Agreed to bring forward the proposed Enterprise Application Integration Middleware Project from 3 years and 4, to years 2 and 3 within the ECFRS IT Strategy.
- 2 Agreed to progress with an identified middleware solution if it could be delivered within the existing funding allocated to the ICT Strategy 2009- 2013; alternatively;
- 3 Agreed that a further paper would be returned to the EFA if the chosen middleware solution would require funding that is additional to that already identified within the ICT Strategy 2009-2013

17. FIREFIGHTING PERSONAL PROTECTION EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT

The Committee received Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/053/10 which provided an update on the progress made in relation to the project to secure the next generation of firefighting Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

The Vice-Chairman referred back to a visit made by herself and Councillor Smith-Hughes to the current provider, Bristol Uniforms, she said that during the visit they had been impressed with the company's capability to track back the source of supply. DCFO Eckley assured Members that Cosalt Ltd (the company awarded the framework agreement) offered absolute traceability to source. Councillor Morris enquired if the new PPE was manufactured in the UK, DCFO Eckley advised that none of the providers who had tendered manufactured in the UK. Councillor Smith-Hughes advised that he had also been impressed following the previous visit to Bristol Uniforms – he enquired if the company was aware that it was losing its contract with ECFRS. DCFO Eckley advised that the quality of the contract with Bristol Uniforms would not deteriorate and that the Finance Director & Treasurer had negotiated an extension in the event of any slippage concerning the commencement of contracting with Cosalt Ltd.

Councillor Pearson enquired if the equipment was as he had already seen in a previous Health & Safety Department committee meeting, DCFO Eckley confirmed that it was excepting the helmet, which would be the Rosenbauer helmet preferred by wearers. DCFO Eckley advised the committee that the PPE would be shown at the upcoming EFA AGM. The Chairman said that the Authority wanted what was best for firefighters.

Resolved:

That Members noted the contents of the report

18. ICT CORE INFRASTRUCTURE REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME - CLOSURE REPORT

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/054/10 confirmed that the Core Infrastructure Replacement Programme initiated in 2009 as part of the ICT Strategy had been completed in line with expectations.

Councillor Smith-Hughes said that he was happy to support the recommendations of the report. He suggested that it would be useful for Members to have confirmation of when the deliverables highlighted in 'Next Stages' on page 4 of the report were completed.

Resolved:

That Members noted the contents of the report

19. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME AND ICT STRATEGY- PROGRESS REPORT 10

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/055/10 provided Members with an update on the progress of the IT Transformation programme and the ICT Strategy.

Resolved:

That Members noted the contents of the report

20. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Congratulations to the Vice-Chairman

The Chairman congratulated the Vice-Chairman on the birth of her first grandchild on 18 May 2010.

21. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

That the public (including the Press) be excluded from the meeting during consideration of minute no. 22 on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as specified in paragraph 1 of Part I of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972.

22. REGIONAL CONTROL CENTRE AND OLYMPIC PLANNING REQUIREMENTS

Report EFA/056/10 by the Chief Fire Officer asked Members to consider the funding of role responsibility for Olympic preparation and planning.

The Chairman referred to the previous meeting of the Fire Authority, he said that he had been fairly critical of transferring funds out of capital to fund an Olympic Support post, that he had previously made his feelings clear at National Olympic Security Oversight Group (NOSOG) meetings - the Service should receive additional funding for the additional work. Referring to the report the Chairman said that he was happy to support the pragmatic approach of its recommendations; he particularly liked the developmental roles into the senior management team. Councillor Smith-Hughes concurred with the Chairman, he said that the two rotational jobs were not built into the system and would cease after the Olympics 2012. Further he said that he did not like the Authority having to fund the additional work but that it had to be done and funded properly which by way of the report's recommendations was for a relatively small extra sum.

Councillor Pearson sought assurance that the Service attended all planning meetings related to the Olympics. Councillor Webster said that there were many. DCFO Hunter advised that every day there were stakeholder group meetings for the Olympics, he said that the Service attended meetings at a strategic level. Councillor Pearson referred to the Olympic Hadleigh site, he said that in his opinion the access was not good. DCFO Hunter confirmed that the Service was looking at solutions to poor access at Hadleigh.

The Vice-Chairman said that it was important to support the recommendations of the report, that she had personally lobbied the Fire Advisor for funding. The Vice-Chairman sought reassurance that ECFRS input to the RCC project would be maintained. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that there would be continual assessment and evaluation of the project.

Councillor Webster referred to changes in training venues. DCFO Hunter agreed that the number of training venues rose and fell, he said that the Service was working to the caveat that it based its preparation on what was known.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that the Service's bid for new burdens funding was not aided by other Authority's who had said it should be business as usual - the Chief Fire Officer had been informed it was a certainty that there would be terrorist activity during the Olympic Games. The Chairman said that his maxim was that to fail to prepare was to prepare to fail.

Resolved:

That Members agreed to:

- 1 withdraw the current temporary Senior Divisional Officer RCC Role
- 2 return to the original model of the ACFO RCC Project Director assuming full responsibility for this project allocating 60% of this post to the RCC project.
- 3 allocate to this role responsibility for Olympic preparation and planning, working within the Service's Service Delivery Executive through its Resilience Department
- 4 temporary promote one Senior Divisional Officer (SDO) to Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) on a six month rotational basis for a period extending until the completion of the Olympic games.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 23 June 2010

Signed
Chairman.....23 June 2010