

# ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

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## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND STRATEGY COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 25 JUNE 2008 AT 10:00 HOURS

**Present:** Councillor B Archibald  
Councillor A M Hedley (Chairman)  
Councillor L M Lee  
Councillor Mrs A E Holland  
Councillor D W Morris  
Councillor R A Pearson  
Councillor T C Smith-Hughes  
Councillor Mrs E Webster

Councillor Archibald was present until agenda item number 9.

### 66. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor K Bobbin and Councillor S Walsh.

### 67. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

### 68. MINUTES

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2008.

#### **Resolved:**

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

### 69. FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2007/08

EFA/075/08 by the Finance Director & Treasurer reported on the final outturn position for 2007/08.

Members referred to the outturn position of capital expenditure when compared to the original and updated budget. The Finance Director & Treasurer advised that the Service was doing more to tighten up forecasting, and the position in 2007/08 whilst disappointing was significantly better than the previous year.

The Finance Director & Treasurer confirmed that there were no specific proposals for a carry over of the underspend in any areas.

**Resolved:**

That Members:

1. Noted the report on Outturn expenditure; and
2. Agreed to increase the Capital Expenditure budget by £980k in 2008/09 to include committed expenditure carried forward from 2007/08

**70. 2007/08 ACCOUNTS**

The Finance Director & Treasurer's report EFA/076/08 sought Members' approval of the 2007-08 Accounts.

The Finance Director & Treasurer referred to the Fire and Rescue Authorities Mutual Limited insurance company's suspension of underwriting activities following a High Court ruling involving a similar local authority mutual; the Committee agreed that ECFRS' investment in the company, reflected in the accounts at cost, did not appear to be at risk.

It was confirmed that the Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts would be signed by the Finance Director & Treasurer and the Chairman of the Policy & Strategy Committee.

**Resolved:**

That Members agreed:

1. The Governance statement (pages 4 to 7 of the Accounts) be approved and that the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer be authorised to sign the statement;
2. The investment in the Fire and Rescue Authorities Mutual Limited is valued at its cost of £210k; and
3. The 2007/08 Statement of Accounts be approved and the Treasurer be authorised to sign the Accounts.

**71. PRUDENTIAL FRAMEWORK FOR CAPITAL FINANCE AND TREASURY  
MANAGEMENT – OUTTURN 2007/08 AND UPDATED 2008/09 INDICATORS**

The Finance Director & Treasurer's report EFA/077/08 was received; its purpose to report on the Authority's performance in 2007/08 against indicators approved in February 2007. Members highlighted the importance of the incremental effect on revenue of capital expenditure plans; the Finance Director and Treasurer confirmed that all Officers were aware that capital programmes required a sound business case.

**Resolved:**

That Members:

1. Noted the treasury management outturn position for 2007/08;
2. Noted the performance against the prudential indicators for 2007/08;
3. Approved the updated 2008/09 prudential indicators outlined in Annex A of report EFA/077/08.

**72. COUNTYWIDE AREA REVIEW**

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/078/08 presented the County Wide Area Review 2008. Members congratulated the Officers responsible for the Review; they were of the opinion that

it had been good to employ internal expertise which had resulted in a good synopsis that could be updated annually.

The Committee referred to climate change, Members noted that although the Fire & Rescue Service was widely considered the first emergency service in the event of flood; the Government did not provide funding for flood risk.

**Resolved:**

That Members:

1. Noted and approved the content of the report.
2. Agreed that the review be updated annually to facilitate strategic planning and provide detailed information that would support future IRMP intentions.

**73. INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (IRMP) PROPOSALS**

The Committee considered Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/079/08 which sought Members' approval for the draft IRMP 2009-12 Consultation Document and contained a proposal that formal twelve-week public consultation would begin on 7 July 08. The Committee agreed the importance and value of all responses received including those from the representative bodies and the workforce. A summary of consultation responses would be considered at the Business Planning Workshop Away Days in October 2008.

Members referred to intention 5 of the consultation document; it was agreed that a wide-ranging and comprehensive feasibility study should look at the role of helicopters in the fire and rescue service.

With reference to intention 6 of the consultation document – Crewing and Attendance Standards; Members were of the view that utilising a new model of empowered autonomous station management would be a move in the right direction.

It was confirmed that Authority Members would be invited to attend the Essex Chamber of Commerce business breakfast event in September 2008 as part of the consultation process.

**Resolved:**

That Members:

1. Noted and approved the content of the draft IRMP – particularly the proposals that would be offered for formal, public consultation.
2. Approved commencement of the statutory, twelve-week public consultation period on 7 July 2008.
3. Agreed that a report be prepared for the EFA meeting of 10 December 2008, setting out details of responses to the public consultation; and seeking approval from Members for any amendments to the original proposals that had been informed by these consultation responses.

**74. STRATEGIC IT EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW**

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/080/08 advised Members regarding the background to the commissioning of the recently completed Strategic IT Effectiveness review conducted for ECFRS by Hedra. Hedra consultant, Tim Bolland presented the outcomes of the review.

The Committee was of the view that in relation to IT the Authority had not yet achieved what it had set out to do and that there was a requirement for further investment to improve performance.

**Resolved:**

That Members noted:

1. the contents of the report and the presentation by the Hedra consultant Tim Bollands, on the outcomes of the Strategic IT Effectiveness review.
2. the work required to deliver a step change in IT effectiveness for Essex Fire Authority.
3. that a proposal for delivering an Information Technology Transformation Programme would be considered as a separate item on the agenda.
4. that given the significant risks identified within the Strategic IT Effectiveness review and the opinions previously expressed by auditors regarding the poor performance of IT in supporting the Authority's improvement agenda, the 'do nothing' option was not a recommendation that the Strategic Management Board felt able to recommend.

## **75. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME**

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/081/08 sought Members' approval for the delivery of an Information Technology Transformation Programme.

The Committee was of the view that it was a priority to invest in a programme of IT improvement, but some Members expressed concern that initial funding would be required from revenue reserves and that the Service should perhaps redeploy resources. Conversely it was the view of some Committee Members that it was not beneficial to have large funds of reserves if the Authority was not getting the correct level of IT performance. The Finance Director & Treasurer advised that Hedra was confident of benefits to the organisation, that as part of the project the measurement and delivery of benefits would remain a key aim.

**Resolved:**

That Members:

1. Noted the contents of the report;
2. Approved a programme of IT transformation based upon the recommended option of a 14 month change period (Option 2 in report EFA/081/08);
3. Approved the transfer from reserves of £1,164k to support the Information Technology Transformation Programme in 2008/09;
4. Noted the requirement to provide a further £610k of funding for the IT transformation programme as part of the 2009/10 budget;
5. Noted that the IT base budget for 2010/11 was expected to reduce by £110k from the 2009/10 level.
6. Noted the intention to appoint Hedra to provide the external professional support to help deliver the Information Technology Transformation Programme, based upon the most economically advantageous procurement route and contractual arrangements to deliver the benefits required.
7. Agreed that the Policy & Strategy Committee would monitor progress of the programme by the receipt of routine reports.

## **76. CHANGE OF CORPORATE IMAGE**

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/082/08 proposed changing the uniform issued to operational staff. Members were pleased to note that ECFRS' emblem would be on the new style shirts.

The Service advised that the Environmental Officer had explored ways in which the existing burgundy shirts could be recycled but that no discernible benefit had been identified.

### **Resolved:**

That Members:

1. Noted the contents of the report.
2. Approved that it was an appropriate time to embark upon a wholesale change of the corporate image of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service by changing the uniform issued to operational staff.

## **77. POLICY, STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN FOR PARTNERSHIPS**

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/083/08 sought Members' approval for the Authority's draft Partnership Policy, Strategy and Action Plan for 2008/11. It was agreed that Members would review the items annually (with exception reporting if required).

### **Resolved:**

That Members:

1. Approved the Partnership Policy statement for adoption by Essex Fire Authority.
2. Approved the Partnership Strategy and Action Plan which had been prepared to contribute towards meeting the Partnership Policy objectives.

## **78. POLICY, STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN FOR DATA MANAGEMENT**

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/084/08 sought Members' approval for the Authority's draft Data Management Policy, Strategy and Action Plan for 2008/11.

### **Resolved:**

That Members

1. Approved the Data Management Policy statement for adoption by Essex Fire Authority.
2. Approved the Data Management Strategy and Action Plan which had been prepared to contribute towards meeting the Data Management Policy objectives.
3. Noted that the Challenge and Innovation Committee would be asked to nominate a Member as the Data Management Champion.
4. Noted that the Authority's Data Management Champion would be invited to engage in the monitoring and review of the existing Data Management Strategy and Action Plan ahead of their revision in May 2009.

## **79. RE EMPLOYMENT OF FIREFIGHTERS**

The Committee considered Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/090/08; it sought approval for the treatment of firefighters who had reached a minimum of 30 years service.

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**Resolved:**

That Members:

Accepted the statement in Appendix 1 of report EFA/090/08 as the strategy for the forthcoming year.

**80. ANNUAL REPORT 2007/08**

Report EFA/085/08 by the Chief Fire Officer presented the Essex Fire Authority Report for 2007/08. It was agreed that the report would be available to stakeholders through the Service's intranet and website.

**Resolved:**

That Members noted the content of the report.

**81. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Pitt Review**

The Committee was advised of the publication of the Pitt Review, Members were advised that it contained a recommendation that "The Government should urgently put in place a fully funded national capability for flood rescue, with Fire and Rescue Authorities playing a leading role, underpinned, as necessary, by a statutory duty". The Committee anticipated that if the Government adopted the recommendation Fire and Rescue Authorities would be provided with funding for flood risk.

The meeting ended at 12:20 hours.