

ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Essex County Fire & Rescue Service



ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AUTHORITY HELD ON WEDNESDAY 22 APRIL 2009 AT 10:00 HOURS

Present:

Councillor B Archibald	Councillor R Pearson
Councillor S Barker	Councillor J Reeves
Councillor K Bobbin	Councillor C Riley
Councillor L J Double	Councillor J Roberts
Councillor A M Hedley (Chairman)	Councillor T C Smith-Hughes
Councillor A E Holland (Vice-Chairman)	Councillor R Walters
Councillor E Johnson	Councillor E Webster
Councillor L Lee	Councillor P Wexham
Councillor S MacPherson	Councillor J Young
Councillor D W Morris	

The following Officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

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

18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTION NOTICES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Finn, Gale, Harrison, Howard, Spencer and White.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman declared a personal interest in item 24 in respect of their appointment as Directors of the Local Authority Control Company.

20. MINUTES

The Authority received the minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2009

Resolved:

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

21. POLICY & STRATEGY COMMITTEE – MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 MARCH 2009

The minutes of the meeting of the Policy & Strategy Committee held on 25 March 2009 were received.

22. CHALLENGE & INNOVATION COMMITTEE – NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 MARCH 2009

The notes of the meeting of the Challenge & Innovation Committee held on 25 March 2009 were received.

23. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Paul King and Ian Davidson from the Audit Commission to the meeting.

The Chairman advised Members of the following items:

FireBreak Pass Outs

The Chairman advised that he had attended three Fire Break pass outs including a pass out organised in conjunction with Downs Syndrome Extra 21. The Chairman thanked all the Officers and staff who had given up their own time to run the course; he said that the youngsters had gained a tremendous amount from the course. Councillor Riley encouraged Members who were not available to attend pass outs to call in during Fire Break courses. The Chief Fire Officer said that the Fire Break course had been challenging work for the youngsters and that it had been a very moving experience to see the pass out; he had received letters of thanks from the parents which would be circulated to Members. Councillor Smith-Hughes agreed that it had been a very moving engagement and an important initiative.

3 March 2009 – National Olympic Security Group (NOSOG)

The above meeting was held at New Scotland Yard.

10-11 March 2009 - LGA Fire Conference Bristol

The Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Lead Members had attended the above conference; Sadiq Khan MP was a speaker.

2 April 2009 – Westminster Briefing

The Chairman advised his attendance at the seminar regarding Improving Fire Service in Local Communities – the Way Forward, followed by attendance at the Local Government House to hear Sadiq Khan MP speak.

4 April 2009

The Chairman had attended a dinner in aid of the Burned Children's Club, which he said was a very worthwhile charity.

9 April 2009 – New Uniform

The Chairman advised that he had attended a photocall at Harlow Fire Station for the roll out of the new uniform.

9 April 2009 – Fire Bike

The Chairman had attended the launch of the Fire Bike, a motorcycle in harlequin livery, sponsored by Canon BMW, a road safety scheme targeted to motorcyclists and their passengers.

8 April 2009 – ECFRS Media Training

The Chairman had attended Kelvedon Park for half-day media training; he recommended the training to all the Members.

Update meetings on the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) with the CFO and meetings about the Corporate Strategy Plan

The Chairman had attended the above meetings.

27 April 2009 – Members' Business Planning Day

Councillor Double highlighted the forthcoming planning day; he said that he objected to the day being held at a venue in Billericay, which he understood to be an expensive location, that the facilities at Kelvedon Park were more than adequate. Councillor Double further said that people would be concentrating on electioneering and he submitted his apologies for the day. The Chief Fire Officer responded that the Business Planning Day was of utmost importance; he was mindful of the date for the local government elections nonetheless business continued and the IRMP would be an important item at the Authority's June AGM. The Chief Fire Officer advised that the venue had been selected to accommodate all Authority Members; Kelvedon Park did not currently have the facility to do so due to other business taking place and the extensive work being undertaken in the car park. The Chief Fire Officer said that he was genuinely disappointed if Members would not attend this important event. Councillor Young sent her apologies as she would have committed to a half day event only.

24 June 09 - AGM

The Chairman advised that the requirement to put back the date of the June AGM had forced a venue change from County Hall to the Central Baptist Church in Chelmsford.

26 June 2009

The Chairman advised that he would host a Charity Dinner for the Burned Children's Club at Stock Brook Manor on the above date and all Members would be invited to attend. It was anticipated that the dinner would be an annual event and that the following year it would be held at a venue to the north of the county.

24. EAST OF ENGLAND REGIONAL CONTROL CENTRE

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/041/09 asked Members to approve an amendment to the Regional Control Centre's Articles of Association regarding the quorum for the transaction of the business of the directors.

In response to Councillor Barker's enquiry about the voting majority at the directors' meetings the Finance Director & Treasurer advised that each director had one vote; the Vice-Chairman advised that voting was proportional at the AGM. The Vice-Chairman added that Essex had appointed alternate directors and had asked the other Authorities to consider doing same. Councillor Double advised that he was happy with the recommendation; the company was a corporate body and the directors' responsibility to run. The Chairman advised Members that training for the LACC had emphasised the requirement for directors to act in the best interests of the company.

Resolved:

That Members approved the terms of the following special resolution:

“That the East of England Regional Control Centre Company’s Articles of Association be altered by replacing the first sentence of article 59 with the following:

“The quorum for the transaction of the business of the directors shall be such number of directors as represents not less than 50% of all duly appointed directors provided that each member of the Company is represented at the meeting by at least one director save that if each member is not so represented the quorum for the transaction shall be not less than 75% of all duly appointed directors etc””

25. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

The Chief Fire Officer’s report EFA/042/09 contained a revised set of financial regulations.

Resolved:

That Members approved the adoption of the revised Financial Regulations.

26. REPORT TO CONSTITUENT AUTHORITIES

Resolved:

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

- 1 Health & Safety Responsibility for Elected Members
- 2 Annual Audit and Inspection Letter
- 3 Hoax Call Activity within Essex County Fire and Rescue Service

27. ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER

The Chief Fire Officer’s report EFA/044/09 presented the Audit Commission’s Annual Audit and Inspection Letter. The Chairman referred to the Audit Commission’s positive comments regarding the operational assessment and thanked officers and staff.

Councillor Lee asked if there had been good co-operation; Mr Davidson responded that there had; that from the Chief Fire Officer to station personnel it had been very honest.

Councillor Barker was interested to hear Mr Davidson’s views on schemes to reduce absenteeism; she referred to schemes that rewarded personnel who had not taken any sick leave. Mr Davidson advised that there would always be those who did not use systems appropriately, that in his view it was a combination of dealing with sickness honestly, to incentivise in the correct way and with the correct balance of carrot and stick.

Councillor Smith-Hughes said that it was important that the Authority was moving forward; that it needed to demonstrate improvement in the upcoming Use of Resources Assessment.

Resolved:

That Members noted the report.

28. THINK ABOUT HEALTH & SAFETY – A GUIDE FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/045/09 contained a booklet launched by the Institute of Safety and Health (IOSH), its purpose to inform Members of their roles and responsibilities in respect to health, safety and welfare in the workplace. Councillor Pearson Lead Member Health & Safety endorsed the booklet to Authority Members. Councillor Archibald suggested that the booklet was probably somewhat general and did not refer specifically to Fire Authorities, that from his perspective he did not have a role in relation to the health and safety of firefighters and officers. The Chief Fire Officer drew attention to the influence Members had on budget and policy decisions; he emphasised Members' responsibility for how health and safety was managed. Councillor Double was of the view that it was not always possible to legislate, that Members could not be responsible for health and safety infringements caused by firefighters acting with best intentions; ACFO Hunter advised that Service policies ensured staff safety through the chain of command and that dynamic risk assessment carried out by officers on the fireground ensured firefighter safety at incidents. SDO Fleming suggested that Members' influence on the health and safety of personnel went beyond decisions related to policy and strategy, he put it that Members demonstrating a good attitude to health and safety set the tone for the organisation.

The Chairman confirmed that it was right and proper that the booklet had been brought to Members' attention.

Resolved:

That Members noted the report and the booklet.

29. HOAX CALL ACTIVITY WITHIN ESSEX COUNTY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Members received Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/046/09 which provided an update regarding the work taking place in the Service to help reduce the impact and instances of hoax calls.

Councillor Barker enquired as to whether there was a method of bypassing the quarterly collation of hoax call data, perhaps to look at data after school holidays. ACFO Thomson advised that the quarterly capture was a transfer mechanism but statistics were available for deeper examination as required, the data was used for a number of initiatives. Councillor Smith-Hughes noted that according to the statistics the caller challenge had reduced the number of hoax calls, ACFO Thomson confirmed that the Service would progress the caller challenge further but in this work it was important to take small steady steps.

Councillor Double referred to the prosecution of a hoax caller in the Dovercourt area; he said that crews had been fearful that a genuine incident would have received delayed response if they had been out on a hoax call and therefore they had been pleased the prosecution had been successful.

Councillor Barker requested that Members be made aware of any sudden increases in hoax call activity in their geographical area.

Councillor Riley highlighted the importance of the work and the necessary funding for the schemes.

Resolved:

That Members considered the work being carried out with regard to hoax calls and noted the report.

30. CHALLENGE & INNOVATION COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2008/09

The Authority received Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/047/09 which provided a summary of the work completed by the Challenge & Innovation Committee in 2008/09 and information regarding the work completed to assist in 'Member Development'.

Councillor Double Chair of the Challenge & Innovation Committee thanked ACFO Eckley for his SMB lead on Challenge & Innovation and SDO Hill for his excellent work in bringing everything together. Councillor Double further said he should be pleased to return to Challenge & Innovation, that it was an important role for the Fire Authority and allowed Members to actively find out about things they did not normally come into contact with. Councillor Walters endorsed Councillor Double's comments, in his view Challenge & Innovation had achieved a lot and had been very worthwhile, Councillor Walters personally thanked SDO Hill.

Resolved:

That Members noted:

- 1 the work completed by the four Task & Finish Groups
- 2 the continuation of the pilot for a paperless committee meeting
- 3 the work completed to assist in Fire Authority Member development

31. MINUTES OF REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD (RMB) MEETING – MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 JANUARY 2009

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/048/09 contained the minutes of the RMB meeting of 21 January 2009.

The Chairman thanked the Vice-Chairman for her work at RMB.

Councillor Lee was concerned that the Authority had been left in limbo with regard to FiReControl, he enquired as to whether any FiReControl centres were working nationally. The Chief Fire Officer advised Essex's cut over date of December 2011, and referred to the Authority's earlier decision not to cut over in the Olympic year of 2012 should there be slippage. ACFO Thomson advised that since technical solutions and systems had not yet been built, news regarding further revision of dates was anticipated in May 2009. Councillor Lee was of the opinion that the Authority should construct a Control building at Kelvedon Park and sell the Hutton site. The Chief Fire Officer advised that the CLG had previously only announced delays of six months, if the cut over was put back with certainty to 2013/14 then it would be in the Authority's interest to entirely vacate Hutton, that the Authority was awaiting the CLG's decision. The Chief Fire Officer advised that there was a range of options to be considered by the Authority when a more definite date for cut over was released

Resolved:

That Members noted the report.

32. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

That the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting during consideration of minute no 33 on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of restricted information.

33. RESILIENCE UPDATE

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/049/09 provided a report of the significant issues concerning Operational Resilience.

In response to Councillor Riley's enquiry ACFO Hunter assured Members that ECFRS and the Essex Resilience Forum (ERF) was very much involved in public consultation regarding the Olympics 2012.

Resolved:

That Members noted the contents of the report.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

To those seeking re-election the Chairman wished them well; he thanked all Members for their support to him as Chairman of the Authority and said how much he had enjoyed the previous nine months, he very much hoped that he would return.

The Chairman thanked Vernon Kendall, Donna McBride, Michael Baker, Peter Mountier, Mark Elsey, Lee Hollingsworth and Lee van Dyke for all their work on the Extra 21 Fire Break course.

The Chairman thanked all ECFRS Officers for their support.

Signed
Chairman, 24 June 2009

