

ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Essex County Fire & Rescue Service



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

Present:

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

The following Officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

Chief Fire Officer David Johnson
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 & Deputy Monitoring Officer, Richard Curtis

71. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTION NOTICES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Finn, Howard, Roberts Webster and Young. Councillor MacPherson was present until minute no. 86.

72. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chief Fire Officer advised that no ECFRS Officers would be present during discussion or voting of item 91, Review of the Terms and Conditions of Principal Officers, of the Constitution and Delegations to Members and Officers and of Various Policies of the Authority.

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman declared a personal interest in item 77 FiReControl in respect of their appointment by the Fire Authority as Directors of the Regional Control Centre Company; the Authority Vice-Chairman had been elected as Chairman of the Company in October 2008. Previous to the meeting the Chairman and Vice-Chairman had received legal advice that their appointment by the Fire Authority did not preclude them from remaining or voting during the item.

73. MINUTES

The Authority received the minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2008.

Resolved:

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

74. POLICY & STRATEGY COMMITTEE – MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 NOVEMBER 2008

The minutes of the meeting of the Policy & Strategy Committee held on 12 November 2008 were received.

75. CHALLENGE & INNOVATION COMMITTEE – MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 NOVEMBER 2008

The minutes of the meeting of the Challenge & Innovation Committee held on 12 November 2008 were received.

76. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman advised Members of his attendance at the following:

9 October 2008 - Westminster Briefing

Prevention, Protection and Response: Working in Partnership to Improve Fire Safety in Local Communities

Examining contents of the National Framework.

20 October 08 - Parliamentary 'Round Table' on the developing National Procurement Strategy at the House of Lords

Minutes are available in the Members' room at Kelvedon Park.

8 October 2008 - National Olympics Security Oversight Group

The Chairman advised that the emergency services and London councils are all working well together in advance of the Olympics 2012.

10 October 2008 - Local Government Association Fire Forum

Minutes are available at the Members' room at Kelvedon Park or <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pageId=1160872>

77. FIRECONTROL

The Authority considered Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/137/08 and agreed that it would be appropriate to adopt a formal position in respect of the FiReControl project.

A Member referred to uncertainties in the CLG's business case; specifically the lack of detail regarding the distribution of running costs, he suggested that the Authority advise CLG that it did not intend to transfer voluntarily to the RCC network and withdraw from the FiReControl project with a view to keep the existing Control to year 2015 at the earliest, a view that was echoed by some other Authority Members who felt that they had seen nothing to give them confidence to change the existing system; it was generally considered that an RCC did not offer much for Essex and created a potential for loss of local knowledge.

The Chief Fire Officer acknowledged that it was clear Fire Services had concerns about the project; since data was unverified it was not possible to make an informed decision. The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that Authorities in the South

West, in particular Avon had looked at not contributing to their RCC company but had been persuaded to do so. No other Authority had withdrawn from the project.

A Member drew attention to the length of time since the original Mott MacDonald report which had been commissioned in 2000; he was of the opinion that too much had changed in the intervening years and highlighted his concerns for the potential for further slippage into the Olympic year of 2012. The Member advised his preference to have Resilience Control alongside other Control Rooms.

The Vice-Chairman advised the Authority that in her capacity as Chairman of the LACC she had expressed her dismay to the Director General of the CLG regarding the announcement that implementation had been pushed back to 2011.

ACFO Thomson advised that Essex would be the last F&RS to cut-over to an RCC on the programmed date of July 2011; he suggested that it allowed Essex to monitor FiReControl's development in other regions up to two years before implementation in Essex.

It was generally accepted that the FiReControl project was underway and unlikely to be cancelled; the Authority was of the view that it was important to remain involved in discussions and not 'to leave the table'; but to be part of the process of understanding.

The Chief Fire Officer assured Members that Officers vigorously challenged the CLG with their concerns over the project. The Chief Fire Officer referred to the CLG's business case, he said that from a professional perspective some of the content had been professionally insulting; but he was of the opinion that it was better to be in a position to shape the final product than to left out of it in entirety. The Chief Fire Officer advised that in his view it would be in the Authority's best interests if implementation was programmed after the 2012 Olympics since systems should be robustly tested before cut-over.

Resolved by majority vote:

That Members:

1. Acknowledged that the project contained significant risks to the Fire Authority;
2. Agreed that further updates be provided to the Fire Authority at suitable intervals to reflect the dynamic nature of the project on the Corporate Risk Register;
3. Adopted the following formal position for the Authority;
The Authority supports the aspiration of delivering a high performing, resilient and affordable network that improves the high levels of performance provided by the existing control room provision. The Authority will not consider entering into a contractual agreement with the local authority controlled company and discharge the function of mobilising under Section 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 through the regional control centre without a resilient network that improves the existing control room provision at a lower cost for the Authority. The Authority will not consider transferring to a regional control centre during 2012.
4. Instructed the Chief Fire Officer to write to the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) articulating the Authority's position in relation to FiReControl and to request a formal response from CLG that would address the Authority's concerns.

78. SERVICE PETROLEUM OFFICER/EMERGENCY PLANNING OFFICER

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/138/08 contained a review of the activities carried out by the Service's Petroleum Officer over the past three years and sought Members' approval for the expansion of the role to a substantive post to encompass the wider remit of an Emergency Planning Officer.

Members asked if the Service would receive direct funding or a precept from the tax payer for the role, ACFO Hunter advised that the Civil Contingencies Act placed more and more expectation on the Service albeit no more funding had been made available. In response to some Members' queries about perception of an increase in the numbers of uniformed flexi-officers the Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the role would not bring about an increase in the budget as the role had been funded on a temporary basis for the previous three years; he further advised the 10-1 ratio in growth of firefighters to officers since 2005.

Resolved:

That Members:

1. Approved the expansion of the post to encompass a wider Emergency Planning remit;
2. Approved the change of status of the post from a temporary post to a substantive post on the establishment

79. INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2009-12

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/139/08 sought Members' approval for the Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) for the period 2009-12.

A Member remarked that he had received negative comment from employees regarding some of the draft proposals specifically those concerning the review of crewing arrangements on specialist appliances; he said that employees had thought some of the options had not contained enough detail; the Member further commented that staff could have been asked to put forward options for consultation. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer agreed that the draft IRMP had not been bottom-up led and that foundation proposals ensured that there had been something to work with. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer further advised that the Service could not supply detailed data at time of proposal and if it had, it may have implied foregone conclusion.

As elected to represent the taxpayers of Essex, Members were minded that there was a requirement to ensure the delivery of an effective Fire & Rescue Service therefore the Authority had a duty to engage in transformation and to embrace change with the support of employees who had a duty to deliver efficiency.

Members discussed the proposal to carry out a feasibility study looking at the role of a helicopter in the Fire & Rescue Service. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that it was intended the study would be wide-ranging and encompass opportunities for partnership working.

The Chairman assured Members that he would take his scrutiny role very seriously; he would continue to challenge Officers in response to Members' enquiries.

Members welcomed the Service's forward thinking approach and were supportive of the IRMP while advocating robust and meaningful engagement with representative bodies.

Resolved:

That Members agreed the Authority's IRMP intentions:

1. That the Authority would cease primary crewing of aerial ladder platforms and review crewing arrangements on other specialist appliances. The Authority would redeploy these resources to meet the demands of new and emerging risks within the county;
2. The Authority would introduce a certification process for incident commanders measured against the operational requirements and competencies expected of firefighters and all incident commanders;
3. The Authority would determine specialist response requirements against current risk levels and introduce effective means for getting specialist rescue resources, including unique skills and safety equipment, to incidents as quickly as possible across the County;
4. The Authority would seek opportunities to increase the availability of retained personnel and review alternative appliance and crewing options to improve our ability to respond to incidents in areas served by the retained firefighters;
5. The Authority would undertake a feasibility study looking at the role of a helicopter in the modern Fire and Rescue Service; and
6. The Authority would implement pilot programmes to see if autonomous station management would allow Station Management Teams to plan resources effectively and flexibly to ensure that fire appliances are kept available, 24 hours per day, 365 days per year

80. REVISED DATE OF ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY AGM FOLLOWING ANNOUNCEMENT OF ENGLISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS 2009

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/140/08 asked Members to agree a date for the Authority AGM following the English Local Government Elections which the CLG had announced would be held on 4 June 2009.

Resolved:

That Members agreed that the Authority AGM be put back to 24 June 2009.

81. POSITIONAL STATEMENT ON THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE INSTALLATION OF SPRINKLER SYSTEMS

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/141/08 informed the Authority of the Service's stance on sprinklers and sought support for a stance on the requirement for certain property types to install fixed protection sprinkler systems. Members were of the opinion that they were supportive of any fire prevention; it was acknowledged that developments in the insurance industry had encouraged more self-insurance in commercial industries and reduced financial incentives to install sprinklers; a Member was of the view that pressure to install sprinkler systems should be applied to both the private and public sectors. Members agreed that the information should be circulated to planning authorities in order that they should have regard to it in planning guidance. It was agreed that that the requirement for installation of sprinkler systems would be placed on the regional agenda.

Resolved:

That Members:

1. Noted the content of the briefing document attached to report EFA/141/08 which explained the rationale behind the proposals.
2. Gave support for the Service's position statement attached to report EFA/141/08.
3. Agreed that information should be disseminated to planning authorities

82. JOINT STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Clerk & Monitoring Officer's report EFA/143/08 updated Members with regard to the progress in establishing the Joint Standards Committee with Essex County Council.

Resolved:

The following Members representing each of the constituent authorities were appointed to the Joint Standards Committee:

Councillor Daphne White (Southend Borough Council)
Councillor Ray Pearson (Essex County Council)
Councillor Suzanne MacPherson (Thurrock Council)

83. PROPOSED ALTERATION TO ESTABLISHMENT

Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/144/08 contained a proposal to reduce the Service's establishment of functional directors by one.

Resolved:

That Members agreed the proposal to reduce the Service establishment of functional directors by one.

84. PROVISIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT SETTLEMENT 2009/10

Members received Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/142/08 which updated Members about the Government's provisional grant settlement proposals for 2009/10.

Resolved:

That Members noted the contents of the report.

85. WHITE PAPER – COMMUNITIES IN CONTROL 'REAL PEOPLE, REAL POWER'

Members were advised of the Government's white paper "communities in control: real people, real power" in Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/145/08.

Resolved:

That Members noted the contents of the report.

86. A12 – REPORT OF THE COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY

Members received Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/146/08 which provided Members with information about the Service's proposed response to the A12 – Report of the Commission of Enquiry published in July 2008.

Members referred to the restrictive access and egress from the Kelvedon Park headquarters particularly during road works. Officers advised that a business case would be brought to Authority Members to include all plans for development of the site including plans to re-engineer the access and egress.

87. ARSON PREVENTION ACTIVITY WITHIN ESSEX COUNTY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Members received Chief Fire Officer's report EFA/147/08 which detailed some of the analysed results of the previous two year's youth intervention schemes that were led by the Service. The Lead Member Safer Communities requested that Members received presentations/training reference Sprinklers and the work with youth to reduce arson.

88. MINUTES OF REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD (RMB) MEETING – MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 OCTOBER 2008

The minutes of the meeting of the Regional Management Board held on 8 October 2008 were received.

89. REPORT TO CONSTITUENT AUTHORITIES

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

- 1 Integrated Risk Management Plan 2009-12
- 2 Provisional Local Government Settlement 2009-10
- 3 Positional Statement on the Requirement for the Installation of Sprinkler Systems

90. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

Resolved:

That the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting during consideration of minute no. 91 on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as specified in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972:

REVIEW OF THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF PRINCIPAL OFFICERS, OF THE CONSTITUTION AND DELEGATIONS TO MEMBERS AND OFFICERS AND OF VARIOUS POLICIES OF THE AUTHORITY (Paragraph 4)

91. REVIEW OF THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF PRINCIPAL OFFICERS, OF THE CONSTITUTION AND DELEGATIONS TO MEMBERS AND OFFICERS AND OF VARIOUS POLICIES OF THE AUTHORITY

Members considered report EFA/150/08 by the Clerk & Monitoring Officer which proposed a review of certain terms and conditions of employment of Principal

Officers of the Fire Service, of the Constitution and Delegations to Members and Officers and of various policies of the Authority.

It was noted that there was a need to review some matters concerning the terms and conditions of employment of Principal Officers. It was also noted that the Authority's Constitution and Scheme of Delegation ought to be reviewed as the last such review was in 2004 and there have been many changes to the way both the Authority and the Fire Service operates since that time. In addition, some of the proposals that might arise out of the work in relation to the terms and conditions of principal officers are likely to suggest some changes to terms of reference of committees and the scheme of delegations. It was therefore resolved that the following work be undertaken: -

1. That the Constitution and Scheme of Delegations be reviewed to ensure that they are up to date and support due process and transparency in the work of the Authority.
2. That a model for job evaluation within the Fire Service be presented for consideration.
3. That the relocation scheme for principal officers be reviewed.
4. That the terms of the Fire Service car provision scheme be reviewed.
5. That the Fire Service's policies in relation to the following matters be reviewed:
6.
 1. Equity and inclusion.
 2. Bullying and whistle blowing at work.

IT WAS ALSO RESOLVED that the Grievance Discipline and Remuneration of Principal Officers Group should review the work noted above and prepare a report with recommendations for approval by the full Fire Authority.

Signed
Chairman, 11 February 2009

