



Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Fire Policy & Strategy Committee, held on Wednesday, 02 November 2016

Present:

Councillor A Hedley	Chairman
Councillor A Holland	Vice-Chairman
Councillor B Aspinell	
Councillor J Chandler	
Councillor M Danvers	
Councillor C Guglielmi	
Councillor C Kent	
Councillor A Naylor	

The following Officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

Adam Eckley	Acting Chief Fire Officer and Acting Chief Executive
Dave Bill	Director of Protection, Prevention and Response
Mike Clayton	Finance Director and Treasurer
Mark Stagg	Director of Transformation
Roy Carter	Service Solicitor and Deputy Clerk and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Shirley Jarlett	Clerk and Monitoring Officer
Fiona Lancaster	Committee Officer (Essex County Council)

Roger Hirst, Essex Police and Crime Commissioner and Chairman of the Emergency Services Collaboration Strategic Governance Board, was also in attendance.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Bayley and Lady P Newton.

1 Declarations of Interest

The Chairman reminded Members to declare any specific interests as appropriate throughout the meeting.

2 Minutes (part I)

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 **Budget Review**

The Committee considered report EFA/119/16 by the Finance Director & Treasurer which reviewed expenditure against budget as at 30 September 2016 and identified major variances to the budget for the period.

The following points arose from the Committee's consideration of the report:

- The Committee noted that the spend on whole time firefighters remained under budget. For on-call firefighters there was a slight overspend and Members noted that additional information on head count numbers would be further improved to explain the trends.
- Support staff pay was under budget for the six months to September, with the main area of underspend being travelling and subsistence at £102k (30%). In response to a question regarding the overspend on casual and temporary staff, the Finance Director & Treasurer reminded Members that the overspend related to the employment of interim staff in the HR and training departments as a result of a departmental reorganisation. The uncertainty for support staff with the potential change in Fire Authority governance had also led to a higher turnover of staff.
- The revised budget relating to Capital Expenditure was being reviewed.
- The Committee discussed the arrangements relating to cross border appliance attendance charges and the effect of the significant increase in London charges. Members noted that charges were made per attendance and appliance and not on the number of individual firefighters mobilised, and that charges were dealt with in arrears. The new Control Mobilising System would enable officers to more closely monitor the allocation and movement of resources.
- The Chief Fire Officer commented that Members may wish to consider how the Fire Authority meets its statutory obligations under the Fire Service Act and the costs involved.

Resolved:

1. That the position on the Authority's income and expenditure at 30 September 2016 compared to the original budget be noted;
2. That the capital expenditure spend against budget for the period to 30 September 2016 be noted; and
3. That the Finance Director & Treasurer would provide a detailed breakdown of the cross border attendance charges.

4 **Fleet Workshops Redevelopment - Update Report**

The Committee considered report EFA/120/16 by the Finance Director & Treasurer which provided an update on the activities carried out since December 2015 and sought approval to pause the project until there was greater clarity on

the alternative uses for the Kelvedon Park site and on the options for the location of Fleet workshops.

The following points arose from consideration of the report:

- Members noted that discussions had been held with Essex Police on the potential for the development of a joint workshop facility, and on the possibility of providing office accommodation for the police management team.
- The risk that further work on the Fire Authority's design phase of the project based on the Kelvedon Park site would involve significant costs and the original plan could end up being aborted.
- Members commented on the amount of construction needed to develop the Kelvedon Park site to accommodate additional personnel and the A12 slip road issues.
- Members were reassured that Fire Authority workshop staff had been kept informed about the potential collaboration of workshops with Essex Police and had been able to contribute to discussions.
- The poor condition of the Lexden workshops meant that a choice on the alternative options was needed without lengthy delay. The Commissioner commented that Essex Police needed to move from their workshops in Boreham and were keen to move ahead with discussions on the potential benefits of joining up fleet workshops.
- The potential savings of having a joint fleet management team and maintenance workshops for both Services on one site.

Resolved:

1. That the potential for alternative uses for the Kelvedon Park site be noted;
2. That the on-going work to consider options for the structure of the fleet management arrangements be noted;
3. That the proposal to pause the Fleet workshop project to enable the Fire Authority to progress property strategy discussions with Essex Police be agreed.

Councillor Aspinell requested that his name be recorded as having voted against.

5 Corporate Risk Register

The Committee considered report EFA/121/16 by the Finance Director & Treasurer which reviewed the corporate risk register for the Fire Authority identifying the potential causes and impact of the risks, together with the current status of associated controls.

The following points arose from consideration of the report:

- Members noted a typographical error on page 35 of the agenda pack, item SRR150005, that the current assessment score of 12 should be shown as a risk rather than an opportunity.
- In response to a question, the Finance Director & Treasurer explained what was meant by the use of the “bow tie” method.
- Some Members indicated that they did not possess the relevant background experience to enable them to complete a detailed review of the risks.
- The Members expressed some concern regarding page 31, with some of the review dates falling on public holiday dates.
- Members were asked to submit their comments/questions to Councillor J Knapman, Chairman of the Audit, Governance and Review Committee, so that these could be taken into account when that Committee met to review the risk register in January 2017.

Resolved:

That the Audit, Governance and Review Committee be requested to carry out a detailed review of the Corporate Risk Register before its submission to the full Fire Authority on 15 February 2017.

6 Aerial Ladder Platforms

The Committee considered report EFA/122/16 by the Director of Prevention, Protection & Response which sought support for proposals on the future direction of the Service’s Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALPs).

The following points arose from consideration of the report.

- Members noted how ALPs can be used as a water tower for larger fire incidents and the infrequency of when these were mobilised in 2015, with an average call out of twice a month.
- The utilisation of ALPs did not support the retention of five specialist appliances and there was now an opportunity to dispose of one ALP to another Fire Service.
- Senior Officers had held discussions with the Service’s Unions and did not envisage industrial action occurring as a result of the reduction in one ALP.
- Some Members expressed concern regarding potential incidents involving tower blocks which could need specialist appliances. In response, the Director of Prevention, Protection & Response commented that they often struggled to use the ALPs due to the lack of parking access on the ground next to high rise buildings. He also reminded Members about the new fire regulations and preventative measures being put in place in high rise buildings.

- The need to ensure that the ALPs were strategically placed in the areas where there could be a greater need, and to take into account cross border work.
- The estimated savings of £12k per annum in relation to the reduction of one ALP and on the maintenance training for crews.

Resolved:

1. That the contents of the report be noted;
2. That the proposal to reduce the number of aerial ladder platforms from five to four be approved;
3. That the disposal of the surplus aerial ladder platform be approved; and
4. That the Director of Prevention, Protection & Response provide a report to the Policy and Strategy Committee on the strategic deployment of the remaining four aerial ladder platforms.

Councillors Danvers and Kent requested that their names be recorded as having voted against.

7 Progressing the Essex Fire Authority specific Lucas Review Recommendations: SOLACE Development Sessions Phase 2

The Committee considered report EFA/123/16 by Hannah Cleary, Seconded Member Support Officer (presented by the Acting Chief Fire Officer and Acting Chief Executive) which provided an update on the activity undertaken since the last meeting and details of a second phase of workshop sessions to be facilitated by the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE).

The following points arose from consideration of the report.

- Following a request from Councillor Danvers, the Seconded Member Support Officer would be asked to explore the possibility of swapping around the topic sessions so that they were held on different days of the week, or to look for additional session dates.
- The costs of the workshop sessions would be met from within existing budgets.
- Members discussed the need for training in the light of potential changes to the Fire Authority's governance arrangements, and their commitment to scrutinise and challenge. There was continued support to address the Irene Lucas recommendations that were specific to Essex Fire Authority Members and which were supported by Sir Ken Knight during his recent review of progress.
- The intention to develop a toolkit for Members to support them in their role.

Resolved:

1. That the report including the details of the six sessions that have been

arranged between November 2016 and January 2017 and the next steps for the progression of the work into 2017 be noted;

2. To formally refer the following element to the Authority's Audit, Governance and Review Committee for progression and resolution:

Review the regular and standing reports that are presented to Fire Authority meetings and Committees with a view to improving the presentation of performance information against the strategic aims of the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, using data from comparable authorities where appropriate; and

3. That the Essex Police and Crime Commissioner and Members of the Essex Police and Crime Panel be invited to attend the second phase of SOLACE workshops.

8 Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on Wednesday 11 January 2017 at 10.00 am.

9 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved:

That having reached the view that, in each case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption (and discussing the matter in private) outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as specified in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

[Roger Hirst, Essex Police and Crime Commissioner, left the meeting at this point].

10 Minutes (part II)

The confidential minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

11 Insurance Pooling - Progress Report

(Exempt under paragraph 3 – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)).

The Committee considered report EFA/124/16 by the Finance Director & Treasurer which provided an update on the current situation regarding insurance pooling.

Resolved:

That the report on the current position be noted.

12 Fringe Allowance - Operational Staff

(Exempt under paragraph 3 – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)).

The Committee considered report EFA/124/16 by the Director of Prevention, Protection & Response which concerned the current Service position on the payment of fringe allowance to operational staff.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted;
2. That the Chief Fire Officer be delegated the authority to progress the settlement of this matter.

(Please note that a fuller record is set out in the confidential minutes of the meeting).

The meeting closed at 11.50 am.

Signed.....
(Chairman)

Date.....