

# ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

## Essex County Fire & Rescue Service



### MINUTES OF A MEETING OF ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13 APRIL 2016 AT 10.00AM

#### **Present:**

Vice-Chairman (in the Chair): Councillor A Holland

#### **Councillors:**

B Aspinell	C Kent
S Barker	J Knapman
D Blackwell	M McEwen
J Chandler	J Moyies
M Coxshall	A Naylor
C Guglielmi	Lady P Newton
I Henderson	C Seagers
P Honeywood	A Turrell
M Hoy	A Wood

The following Officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

Adam Eckley	Acting Chief Fire Officer
Dave Bill	Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Operations
Mike Clayton	Finance Director and Treasurer
Roy Carter	Service Solicitor
Shirley Jarlett	Deputy Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority
Judith Dignum	Committee Secretary

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Danvers, A Erskine, A Hedley, J Jowers and J Ware-Lane.

#### **1. Minutes – Essex Fire Authority**

The minutes of the meeting of Essex Fire Authority held on 17 February 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Arising from consideration of minute 7 (Chairman's Announcements), the Chairman noted a point raised by Councillor Henderson regarding comments made previously by the Chairman concerning availability and response times for on-call appliances at Dovercourt Fire Station.

## **2. Minutes – Policy and Strategy Committee**

The minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Strategy Committee held on 16 March 2016 were received.

Arising from minute 5 (HR and Payroll Management Systems Solutions), a number of members expressed concern that they had become aware of additional relevant information on the issue after the meeting, and that therefore they had not been in possession of all the necessary detail at the time when they took the decision. In the light of these comments, it was agreed that the issue should be re-submitted to the Committee's next meeting on 22 June 2016.

## **3. Minutes – Cultural Review Sub-Group**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cultural Review Sub-Group of the Principal Officers Human Resources Committee held on 10 February were received.

## **4. Minutes – Principal Officers Human Resources Committee**

The minutes of the meetings of the Principal Officers Human Resources Committee held on 10 February and 10 March 2016 were received.

## **5. Chairman's Announcements**

The Authority noted details of events attended by the Chairman between 1 February and 31 March 2016.

The Vice-Chairman reported on the LGA Annual Fire Conference in March, which she had attended together with Councillors Hedley, Kent and Turrell.

## **6. Appointment of the Clerk and Monitoring Officer**

Shirley Jarlett, Deputy Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority, and Roy Carter, Service Solicitor, were not present during consideration of this item.

The Authority considered a report (EFA/049/16) by the Acting Chief Fire Officer concerning the structure of the Office of the Clerk and Monitoring Officer to Essex Fire Authority. Noting that Philip Thomson, the former office-holder, had stepped down on 31 March 2016, the Authority, the Acting Chief Fire Officer and the Strategic Management Board place on record their sincere appreciation to him for his support and significant contribution to the work of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service over many years.

It was proposed that Shirley Jarlett of Essex Legal Services (the legal trading entity of Essex County Council), currently Deputy Clerk and Monitoring Officer, be appointed as Clerk and Monitoring Officer. This proposal had received the support of the Policy and Strategy Committee at its meeting on 16 March 2016. Members noted that, were the appointment to be agreed by the Authority, Mrs Jarlett would subsequently appoint Roy Carter, Service Solicitor, as Deputy Clerk and Monitoring Officer.

In response to Members' questions, the Acting Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the ability of the Service Solicitor to provide legal advice as Deputy Monitoring Officer would not be compromised by his role as a member of the Strategic Management Board.

### **Resolved**

1. That Shirley Jarlett be appointed as Clerk and Monitoring Officer to Essex Fire Authority with immediate effect, and that the support of the Policy and Strategy Committee for this appointment, expressed at its meeting on 16 March 2016, be noted.
2. That the subsequent appointment by Mrs Jarlett of Roy Carter, Service Solicitor, as Deputy Clerk and Monitoring Officer be noted.
3. That the Authority, the Acting Chief Fire Officer and the Strategic Management Board place on record their sincere appreciation to Philip Thomson for his support and significant contribution as Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the work of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service over many years.

## **7. 2016-17 Work Programme**

The Authority considered report EFA/050/16 by the Acting Chief Fire Officer which reviewed the work programme for the Authority and its main committees for 2016/17 and made a number of related recommendations.

The following responses were provided to Members' comments and questions:

- The proposed programme of work had taken account of the revised timetable for approval of the accounts, and this would also be reflected in the calendar of meetings to be considered by the Authority at its annual meeting on 8 June.
- Responsibility for determining the work programme for committees lay with the Fire Authority rather than with the committees themselves. Suggestions of topics for future consideration made by Members were subject to approval by the Authority.
- Members played an important role in scrutinising the effectiveness of and value for money offered by major projects. Opportunities for their input were sought via regular reports to Committee, consultation with the political Group Leaders and the submission of project closure reports.
- Members expressed their support for the ongoing piece to work to revise the Scheme of Delegation.
- The need to ensure that all Members were informed as to progress in implementing the recommendations arising from the Cultural Review was reaffirmed, and the arrangements in place to facilitate this were noted.

It was moved by Councillor Knapman, seconded by Councillor Wood, that the issue of the value for money offered by the Expert Advisory Panel be included in the work programme for the Audit Governance and Review Committee. Upon being put to the vote, this was agreed and accordingly it was:

### **Resolved**

That the work programme for regular reports in 2016/17 be agreed, subject to the addition of the following topic to those for consideration by the Audit, Governance and Review Committee:

- i. Expert Advisory Panel – value for money assessment.

## **8. Make Some Noise Employee Engagement Survey Results 2015**

The Authority considered report EFA/051/16 by the Communications Manager (presented by the Acting Chief Fire Officer) which outlined the process adopted by the Service to deliver the Make Some Noise Employee Engagement Survey 2015, the second such annual survey to be undertaken. The report provided details of the results and explained the proposals to ensure action would be taken in response to them.

Alan Mitchell of People Insight (the company contracted to undertake the survey) was in attendance to present the Survey results, and to respond to Members' comments and questions.

The following issues arose from Members' consideration of the report and presentation:

- Extensive protections were in place to ensure that individuals could not be identified from their responses, and indeed, senior managers within the Service had no interest in obtaining this information. However, the perception that this was still a risk may have discouraged people from providing what they considered to be potentially attributable information. This was common at a time of major change, and in organisations with a history of bullying.
- Noting with some disappointment the negative result around their engagement with staff, Members considered whether this was in fact part of their role, and contrasted this with the expectation of their respective councils. They expressed the hope that recent efforts to begin to address the issue through the Independent Review Action Plan would lead to a marked improvement in future.
- Mr Mitchell clarified that responsibility for addressing the findings of the Survey lay with Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, with oversight by the Authority.

The report was **noted**.

## **9. Independent Cultural Review – Progress Update**

The Authority considered report EFA/052/16 by the Acting Chief Fire Officer which provided the requested regular progress update on delivery of the work programme required to improve the culture within Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS). The report of the Chairman of the Expert Advisory Panel was attached as Appendix A.

Members' commitment in attending the large numbers of meetings and workshops associated with the Review was acknowledged.

Support was expressed for the opportunities to meet and engage with ECFRS staff, for example through station visits and the Your Voice Forum, as these were believed to be effective in terms of building links between staff and Members of the Authority

Members discussed in some detail their view of the overall effectiveness of the Expert Advisory Panel, with some detecting a note of frustration in the report of the Panel Chairman. There was concern that while some early progress had undoubtedly been made, the Panel may be finding it difficult to get to the heart of the Authority's problems. Particular reference was made to the need to focus on the eradication of bullying. The view was expressed that it was too early to be expecting major change. Although entries on an Action Plan could be marked as 'complete', this did not necessarily mean that a culture change had been achieved; this could take many years.

It was agreed that consideration would be given to the format and content of the progress information provided to the Authority, and to ensuring that the work and achievements of the Cultural Review Sub-Group were shared with all Members.

### **Resolved:**

1. That the report be noted.
2. That consideration be given to the format and content of the progress information provided to the Authority, and to ensuring that the work and achievements of the Cultural Review Sub-Group are shared with all Members.

## **10. RDS Development Project – Progress Update**

The Authority received report EFA/053/16 by the RDS Development Project Manager, presented by the Acting Chief Fire Officer, which provided a progress update on the Programme 2020 Retained Duty System (RDS) Development Project. Lisa Hart, RDS Development Project Manager was in attendance to give a presentation on the Project, and to respond to Members' questions.

The following points arose from Members' consideration of the report and presentation:

- The name of the project would now change to reflect current terminology, referring to 'on-call firefighters' instead of the 'Retained Duty System' (RDS).
- Ms Hart commented on the measures proposed to increase numbers of on-call firefighters, including the introduction of a less demanding availability model, and improving liaison with local employers. The action proposed to improve retention of on-call firefighters was also described, including greater support for work/life balance, and improved opportunities for career progression and development
- Councillor Guglielmi (Retained Duty System Member Champion) paid tribute to Ms Hart's work in taking control of the project and ensuring that good progress was made.
- Meetings were due to be held with Trade Unions, in particular with regard to the proposed new on-call firefighter contract, and efforts were also being made to engage with employees who were not members of a Trade Union.
- Referring to the ongoing consultation on future service provision, the Acting Chief Fire Officer reaffirmed that each of the three options proposed would allow the response standards previously approved by the Authority to be maintained. He was satisfied that on-call firefighter numbers would be sufficient.
- Office-based Essex County Fire and Rescue Service staff would be encouraged to become on-call firefighters, and could combine this with their substantive role by basing themselves at on-call fire stations for some of the working week.
- It was not permissible for individuals claiming Job Seekers Allowance to seek to become on-call firefighters.

The Chairman and Members thanked Ms Hart for her comprehensive report and presentation and for the excellent progress being made by the Project.

The report was **noted**.

#### **11. Trade Union Facility Time 2015-16 Report and the Joint Negotiation and Consultation Arrangements**

The Authority considered report EFA/054/16 by the Acting Chief Fire Officer, presented by the Finance Director and Treasurer, which provided an annual update on the use of Trade Union Facility time in accordance with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015. The report provided information which must be published in accordance with the Code for the twelve month period April 2015 to March 2016, including an estimate of spend and percentage of the total pay bill in respect of employees who spend the majority of their time on union duties.

Members noted that there were no plans to change the current level of support to the Trade Unions, and their important role at a time of major change was acknowledged.

The report was **noted**.

## **12. Report to Constituent Authorities**

The Authority considered report EFA/055/16 by the Committee Secretary proposing issues for inclusion in the report to be circulated to the Constituent Authorities.

### **Resolved:**

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

1. Appointment of the Clerk and Monitoring Officer
2. Make Some Noise Employee Engagement Survey Results 2015
3. Progress report on the delivery of the work programme required to improve the culture within Essex County Fire and Rescue Service
4. RDS Development Project – Update
5. Trade Union Facility Time 2015-16 Report and the Joint Negotiation Consultation Arrangements

## **13. Date of Next Meeting**

Members noted that the next meeting of the Authority (the Annual Meeting) would take place on Wednesday 8 June 2016 at 10.00am.

## **14. 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 they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as specified in paragraphs 1, 3 and 4 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

## **15. Minutes – Policy and Strategy Committee (confidential)**

The confidential minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Strategy Committee held on 16 March 2016 were received.

## **16. Minutes – Principal Officers Human Resources Committee (confidential)**

Councillors Henderson, Lady Newton and Turrell were not present during consideration of the minutes of the 10 February meeting, due to their potential role in any future Appeals Panel associated with the Chief Fire Officer.

The confidential minutes of the meetings of the Principal Officer Human Resources Committee held on 10 February and 10 March 2016 were received.

Arising from consideration of the 10 February minutes, the Clerk and Monitoring Officer acknowledged Members' frustration at the length of time being taken to bring the issue to a conclusion, reiterating that the approach being adopted reflected the advice of the Authority's legal representatives.

## **17. Urgent Exempt Business**

The Chairman agreed to consideration of the following item of urgent exempt business on the grounds that there was a need to consider a recommendation made by the Principal Officers Human Resources Committee since the despatch of the agenda for this meeting.

### **Appointment of Director of Transformation**

Following interviews held at its meeting on 4 April 2016, the Principal Officers Human Resources Committee recommended to the Authority that Mark Stagg be appointed as Director of Transformation.

The minutes of the meeting would be submitted to the Authority's next meeting on 8 June.

### **Resolved**

That, following interviews held on 4 April 2016, Mark Stagg be appointed as Director for Transformation.

The meeting closed at 13.05.

Signed.....

Chairman  
8 June 2016