



# Essex Fire Authority

## Report to the Constituent Authorities of the meetings on 15 February and 12 April 2017

The items reported below are the main issues considered by Essex Fire Authority at its meetings on 15 February and 12 April 2017. Full details of all the matters considered, together with the minutes of the meetings, can be viewed on the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service website, [www.essex-fire.gov.uk](http://www.essex-fire.gov.uk).

### 1. 2017/18 Budget

The Authority considered the revenue and capital budgets for 2017/18, together with information on the budget and business planning process and on the formula grant settlement, share of national non-domestic rates, council tax base and collection account for 2017/18.

The Authority noted that the Government funding settlement figures were still provisional and were expected to be formally endorsed in the near future. It was confirmed that if these did change it would not affect the precept. Following the Fire Authority's decision in June 2016 to support Option 2 of the Service change options, the budget had been prepared based on a Council tax increase of 1.99%.

The Authority agreed the budget for 2017/18 as follows:

	2016/17 Budget	2017/18 Budget
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	£71,304k	<b>£70,128k</b>
Decrease from 2016/17		-£1,176k
Precept	£41,224k	£42,822k
Band D Council Tax Increase from 2016/17	£67.68	<b>£69.03</b> <b>1.99%</b>

1. A net expenditure budget of £70.128m;
2. A precept of £42.822m;
3. A Band D council tax of £69.03 (an increase of £1.35 or 1.99%);
4. The bands of Council Tax are shown in the following table.

Council Tax Band	2016/17	2017/18 with 1.99% Increase
A	£45.12	£46.02
B	£52.64	£53.69
C	£60.16	£61.36
<b>D</b>	<b>£67.68</b>	<b>£69.03</b>
E	£82.72	£84.37
F	£97.76	£99.71
G	£112.80	£115.05
H	£135.36	£138.06

5. Capital expenditure budget of £11.890m in 2017/18.

## 2. Charging

The Authority considered the arrangements for charging for the provision of specific services and agreed the areas where charges will be applied. The proposed tariff and charging arrangements were agreed with a 1% increase for implementation from 1 April 2017.

## 3. Local Business case for Joint Governance of Police and Fire and Rescue in Essex

The Authority considered a report from the Acting Chief Fire Officer which presented the Local Business Case for greater collaboration between Police and Fire and Rescue Services in Essex. The business case assesses the three options set out in the Policing and Crime Act 2017 and proposes the option of joint governance, based on that assessment. Joint Governance would involve the Police and Crime Commissioner taking on the role of the Fire Authority. The Policing and Crime Act, which had received Royal Assent on the 31st January 2017, placed a duty on emergency services to collaborate and also enabled Police and Crime Commissioners to take on responsibility for the Fire and Rescue Services in their area where a local case is made.

There had been a number of opportunities for the Authority to engage with the process so far. Additionally, following some concerns and questions raised with regard to the future role of a Police, Crime and Fire Panel and the need to hold the Police and Crime Commissioner to account in a new governance structure, a task and finish group had been established comprising Members of both the Fire Authority and Police and Crime Panel to consider how such a Panel may work if established.

Following development of the Local Business Case, a 12 week consultation period was now proposed running from 16th February to 10th May 2017. Feedback from this consultation would be considered prior to finalising the Local Business Case, for submission to the Home Secretary on 19th May 2017.

The Authority has noted the progress made in the development of the Local Business Case and engagement with Fire Authority Members, the consultation and engagement strategy setting out the approach and activity for the consultation period and the proposed timeline. If the Local Business Case is

agreed by the Home Secretary the proposed go live date for the new governance arrangements will be 1<sup>st</sup> October 2017. The Authority supported the formal consultation on the Local Business Case by a majority.

#### **4. Cultural Review Progress Report**

The Authority has received an update on progress with regard to delivery of the work programme required to improve the culture within Essex County Fire and Rescue Service.

#### **5. The Thomas Review and Essex County Fire & Rescue Service Response (ECFRS)**

In early 2014, Adrian Thomas was commissioned by the then Fire Minister to undertake an independent review of conditions of service for Fire and Rescue Services in England. The review formally launched in October 2014 and concluded in February 2015, however the final report had only recently been published in November 2016.

The Authority noted the response of ECFRS to the 45 recommendations contained within the Review, noting that the Service was in a reasonably strong position with regard to addressing the recommendations due to the work already ongoing.

#### **6. Programme 2020**

The Authority noted the report of the Acting Chief Fire Officer providing an update on the progress of 2020 which was established in February 2015 to oversee the work of ECFRS in pursuit of the Authority's strategic priorities: Service Led, Community Focussed, Values Driven and Financially Sustainable.

#### **7. Delegation Review**

The Authority considered the proposed amendments to update and improve the Constitution, scheme of delegations and standing orders, following a review of the Constitution and taking into account matters raised by Members.

With regard to the scheme of delegations for the Chief Fire Officer, the Authority noted the limit of £100,000 with regard to acquiring, re-use or disposal of land and buildings.

#### **8. Approach for the independent exit review of progress made against the Lucas Review recommendations**

The Authority considered a report which brought forward a number of recommendations with regard to how any potential withdrawal by the Expert Advisory Panel would benefit from an independent 'Exit Review' to confirm that change has been sufficiently embedded to the extent that the Panel's support as critical friend and monitoring role is no longer required. The suggested timeframe

for the review was during the summer months with a report presented to the September meeting of the Authority.

Members expressed the view that it would be beneficial for current Members of the Authority to be involved in the discussion on the report from the exit review for the purpose of continuity, even if they were no longer Members of the Authority following the local Elections.

The Authority agreed to appoint Sir Ken Knight to lead an 'Exit Review' and assess overall progress against the recommendations contained in the Lucas Report, and approved the proposed approach for the Review.

## **9. Changes to the Governance Structure of EFA (Trading) Ltd**

The Authority has approved changes to the memorandum and articles of association of EFA (Trading) Ltd, to change the status of the company to a Community Interest Company and to facilitate anticipated governance changes for Essex County Fire and Rescue Service.

The Authority was advised that as a Community Interest Company (CIC) EFA (Trading) Ltd would be able to seek external funding to support community safety work. When the company was originally established CIC status did not exist, but it is now possible to apply to re-register as a CIC. The company would cease being 'profit-making' and use the profit to support safety work.

The Authority has also agreed to change the name of the company to 'Essex Fire Community Interest Company' and to remove the current distinction between Category A (Member) and Category B (Officer) directors. The Finance Director and Treasurer was authorised to make the necessary changes on behalf of the Authority.

## **10. Progressing the Lucas Review Recommendations for the Essex Fire Authority Members; specifically in relation to the outcomes of facilitated SOLACE workshops**

In response to a number of recommendations in the Lucas Review (September 2015) specifically relating to Essex Fire Authority Members, the Society for Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) had been commissioned to provide a series of workshops for Members and Officers in two phases. The Authority considered a report by SOLACE outlining activities and outputs from the two phases of Member and Officer development.

The report also presented a proposal from the SOLACE for an Induction Programme for Members of the Essex Fire Authority. Given the consultation currently being run by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) on a potential change of governance, it was appropriate that the Programme be considered by the PCC and any future members of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel, should this body exist in the future.

The Authority noted the report and the commitment by Members to develop their role as political leaders of the Fire Service in Essex, Southend and Thurrock.

The SOLACE proposal for an Induction and Development Programme for Members of the Authority was accepted and adopted.

#### **11. Service Strategy Progress Report – September 2016 to March 2017 and Performance Management Framework**

The Authority considered a report on the progress that the service has made against the Authority's Strategy for the Service which was approved in September 2016. The report also brought forward a proposal for a Performance Management Framework for the Authority and Service. The report provided an update on each theme and activity since the Strategy had been approved and was put forward for Members to note the progress and positive start to delivering the strategy.

Work was also being undertaken to develop a new Performance Management Framework. Reporting on this would be presented to the Authority in the future. The Framework picked up on the responsibilities under the National Framework to compare performance with other services. The focus in the past had been mainly regarding the operational function, however the approach now was across the service including the back office function. This Framework links back to the recently approved values and looks to embed the process of plan and do and review and revise, learning from areas for improvement and good practice.

Following agreement of the Framework, working with the Audit, Governance and Review (AGR) Committee, performance indicators would be put together service wide, also picking up areas for improvement through the cultural review work.

The strategy was preparing the service for possible governance changes. The status quo would not be an option going forward.

When the approach had been finalised there would be a more detailed report and update looking at where improvements were required and where the service was performing well. Members welcomed a more detailed report at a future meeting.

By a majority vote, the Authority noted the progress that the Service had made against the Authority's Strategy and adopted the proposed Performance Management Framework for the Authority and Service.

#### **12. Progress report on the delivery of the work programme required to improve the culture within Essex County Fire and Rescue Service**

The Authority noted a progress report on the delivery of the work programme required to improve the culture within the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service. This supports the resolutions reached by the Authority at its meeting of 7th October 2015.

The report set out the progress which had been made since the last report. A self-assessment had been produced which was an honest appraisal of where the service thinks it is with this work and what is holding it back from further progress. Work was also underway to progress the process of moving from 'Rank to Role' and the Management Review.

Members' attention was drawn to the significant achievement of signing the dispute resolution agreement which was a significant milestone.

The work of the Women's Forum Steering Group continued and the inaugural meeting of the Diversity Action Group had taken place. The Talent Pool/Promotion Service had been launched and the Assessment and Development Centres were being developed for all Grey and Green Book roles to provide a consistent, fair and transparent way of identifying, developing and promoting talent. The first set would be running through until June 2017. The Employee Engagement Survey had been completed at the start of the year and the results were expected. Early indications were that there were some positive signs of improvement.

**Councillor Anthony Hedley  
Chairman**