



Essex Fire Authority

Report to the Constituent Authorities of the meeting on 7 December 2016

The items reported below are the main issues considered by Essex Fire Authority at its meeting on 7 December 2016. Full details of all the matters considered, together with the minutes of the meeting, can be viewed on the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service website, www.essex-fire.gov.uk.

1. Change in Membership of Essex Fire Authority

The Authority has welcomed Councillor Aaron Watkins (Thurrock Council) and Councillor Andy Erskine (Essex County Council) to membership in place of Councillor Sue MacPherson and Councillor Lady Patricia Newton. The Authority has noted the impact of Councillor Watkins' and Councillor Erskine's appointments on the membership of its committees, and made adjustments as necessary.

2. Statement of Assurance

The 'Fire and Rescue National Framework' for England includes the requirement for the Authority to approve an annual Statement of Assurance. One of the principal aims of the Statement is to deliver an assessment of the fire and rescue service's performance. It will also be used as a source of information on which to base the Secretary of State's biennial report under Section 25 of the Fire and Rescue Act 2004.

The Authority has approved the Statement of Assurance and authorised the Chairman to sign it on behalf of the Authority.

3. Audit Appointments

The Authority has considered options for the appointment of the External Auditor following the end on 31 March 2018 of the transitional arrangements put in place at the closure of the Audit Commission.

Having assessed the relative benefits and risks of the various options, the Authority has agreed to opt-in to the Sector Led Body appointed by the Secretary of State under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. The independent decision on the appointment of the external auditor for the Essex Fire Authority from 2018/19 onwards will therefore be delegated to Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd.

4. 2020 Programme 6-monthly review

The Authority received and noted an update on the progress of Programme 2020 over the past six months from June 2016. Programme 2020 was set up in February 2015 to plan the work of ECFRS to become service-led, community-focussed, values driven and financially sustainable. The definition phase of the Programme included the work to develop a new Strategy for the Essex Fire Authority, an updated Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and options for change which were all agreed by the EFA on 8 June 2016.

The implementation plan for the changes consulted upon as Option 2 was approved by the EFA on 7 September 2016 alongside the Authority's new Strategy for the Service.

The Essex Fire Authority Strategy 2016 – 2020, 'Leading the way to a safer Essex' sets out the priorities and significant objectives for the Service. The objectives have been arranged into five strategic themes:

- People and Leadership
- Prevention
- Protection
- Response
- Public Value and Collaboration

With Programme 2020 acting as the delivery vehicle for the Strategy the high-level objectives for the Programme are:

- Implement the key activity required to deliver the future direction of Essex Fire Service as agreed within the Essex Fire Authority Strategy 2016 - 2020
- Implement the changes required to deliver the new response model as agreed at the Essex Fire Authority (EFA) on 8 June, 2016
- Ensure the implementation programme aligns with the programme for emergency service collaboration
- Ensure the actions from the Independent Review Action Plan are met through integration into the delivery of Programme 2020.

The report considered the progress of the programme over the past 6 months from June 2016, specifically in relation to the key milestones and the key areas of programme activity.

The Chairman and Members acknowledged the significant progress that had been made towards implementing the Programme's objectives, and thanked all who had been involved.

5. Attendance at Conferences 2017

The Authority has approved attendance for specified Members of the Authority to attend a range of national events which appear on the Fire and Rescue Service calendar annually, including:

- LGA Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition 2017
- LGA Conference and Exhibition 2017 and;
- ALARM National Education forum for Risk Management Conference 2017.

The Authority has also delegated authority to the Acting Chief Fire Officer, in consultation with the Chairman of Essex Fire Authority, to approve the attendance by Members at any conference, seminar or other activity which has not been the subject of a specific report to the Authority or one of its Committees.

6. Local Business Case

The Authority has received a report by the Acting Chief Fire Officer and a presentation by the Police and Crime Commissioner concerning the draft initial business case prepared by the Police and Crime Commissioner for the joint governance of Police and Fire and Rescue Services in Essex.

The Authority has noted the progress made to date, and acknowledged that development of and consultation on a full Local Business Case will proceed once the Policing and Crime Bill receives the Royal Assent (expected early in 2017). Members of the Authority will continue to have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the full Local Business Case ahead of the formal consultation. It has been agreed to establish a working group with proportional representation and invited representation from the current Essex Police and Crime Panel to consider and make recommendations on the future scrutiny and oversight role of the Police, Crime and Fire Panel.

The Authority has noted that the timescale for implementation of the new governance arrangements is likely to be 1 October 2017, but this is dependent upon a range of activities being achieved before then. In the event of a delay, the next feasible date of transfer would be 1 April 2018.

**Councillor Anthony Hedley
Chairman**