

Report title: Proposed Appointment of the Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive	
Report to: Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel	
Report author: Roger Hirst (Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority)	
Date: 21 October 2021	For: Decision
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County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Purpose of Report

The process to be followed by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority (“the Authority”) in appointing a Chief Fire Officer is set out in Chapter 1 of Part 2 of the Fire and Rescue Authority (Police and Crime Commissioner) (Application of Local Policing Provisions, Inspection, Powers to Trade and Consequential Amendments) Order 2017. As part of this process, the Authority is required to notify the Police, Fire and Crime Panel of their proposed appointment of a Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive, and the Panel is required to review the proposed appointment via a Confirmation Hearing and to make a report to the Authority, including a recommendation as to whether the candidate should be appointed. The purpose of this report is to assist the Panel in fulfilling its role in this process.

Both the Authority and the candidate will be attending the Confirmation Hearing to answer any questions posed of them by the Panel.

2. Recommendations

That the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel:

- Reviews the proposed appointment of Rick Hylton (“the candidate”) as the Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive, and
- Makes a report to the Authority on the proposed appointment, including a recommendation as to whether the candidate should be appointed.

3. Context / Summary

The current Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive of the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service has informed the Authority of her intention to retire on 31 December 2021. The Authority has therefore undertaken a robust, open and competitive process to select a preferred candidate for the role, to take office in January 2022.

The candidate

The Authority proposes to appoint Rick Hylton as the Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive.

The criteria used to assess the suitability of the candidate for the appointment

The criteria used to assess the suitability of candidates is set out in the job profile attached at Appendix 1. The role does not have to be operational but includes managing the personnel, services and equipment secured by the Authority for the purposes of carrying out the functions conferred on it by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and other enactments.

The formal selection process was held on 14 and 15 September 2021 and included:

- A pre-prepared presentation responding to the question, “We have developed a culture which is more positive and kinder. We are moving forward to a culture that is high performing, accountable and focussed on service delivery. Describe how you would lead us into that culture whilst maintaining and embedding the gains made toward our positive and kinder culture.”
- A values and competency based interview
- A staff stakeholder panel
- A stakeholder panel with the Service Leadership Team
- A media exercise run by an independent journalist
- A written assessment
- A psychometric assessment (Occupational Personality Questionnaire)
- An informal conversation with the Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

The various elements of the process assessed candidates against the “Leading the Service” level within the National Fire Chiefs Council’s (NFCC’s) Leadership Framework (attached for information at Appendix 2).

The interview panel consisted of:

- The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority
- The Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer to the PFCC
- Paul Hancock OBE (former Chief Fire Officer of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service and former President of the then Chief Fire Officers Association (now the National Fire Chiefs Council))
- A local authority Chief Executive

Paul Hancock has been supporting the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service with its transformation and cultural change programme over recent years, so knows the service well, and was also involved in recruiting the Chief Fire Officer for East Sussex in 2017. Mr. Hancock served as the Independent Member on the selection panel and has confirmed for the Police, Fire and Crime Panel that applicants were shortlisted and assessed against the agreed appointment criteria; that the selection process was conducted in line with the principles of merit, fairness and openness, and that the selection panel was fully able to fulfil its purpose of challenging and testing that

applicants met the necessary criteria to perform the role. His report to the Panel is attached at Appendix 3.

Following the assessment centres on 14 and 15 September, the two top scoring candidates were also invited to engage in an informal conversation with the Chief Constable of Essex Police, with whom the successful candidate will need to work closely as part of the Essex Emergency Services Collaboration Programme.

Why the candidate satisfies the criteria

In order to maximise the number of suitable candidates attracted, Gatenby Sanderson, a specialist executive search and selection company with significant experience of filling senior roles in emergency and public services, was engaged by the Authority to support the recruitment process. The post was advertised during the week commencing 26 July 2021 for a period of four weeks, closing on 25 August 2021. The role was advertised via the National Fire Chiefs Council's (NFCC's) website, and via Guardian Jobs, the Municipal Journal (MJ) and the Asian Fire Service Association's (AFSA's) newsletter, along with both the Authority's and Gatenby Sanderson's websites and social media channels. A dedicated microsite was developed to support the recruitment process, hosting a candidate information pack and a promotional video encouraging candidates to come to Essex, along with other content.

Initial applications were made via the submission of a CV and a supporting statement setting out how the candidate's skills and experience match the essential criteria outlined in the person specification. Nine candidates applied in total. The role attracted candidates both from across the UK and internationally, and both uniformed and non-uniformed. Non-uniformed candidates came from both the public and private sectors.

Initial screening was carried out by Gatenby Sanderson, which long-listed seven applicants for the Authority's consideration. Five of these were shortlisted and assessed over the two selection days. The Authority had a very strong field of candidates to select from, all of whom proved themselves to be credible across the two days.

Mr. Hylton's CV is attached at Appendix 4. He has had an extensive operational career which began at Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service, where he spent 22 years progressing up the ranks to Assistant Chief Fire Officer. He moved from Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service to his current role as the Deputy Chief Fire Officer at the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service in 2019.

In both his current and previous roles, Mr. Hylton has been an instrumental leader and has been involved in significant change and improvement programmes, including redesigning the response function for Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service. He also previously acted up into the Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive role at the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service to cover the long-term sickness absence of the incumbent.

He has previously chaired two Community Safety Partnerships and established a joint enforcement team in Peterborough. More recently, he co-chaired the Strategic Coordination Group (SCG) which led the multi-agency response to the Coronavirus pandemic across Greater Essex. Since 2015, he has been Chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council's (NFCC's) Home Safety Committee, leading a range of stakeholders, including the Home Office, to champion and develop best practice in home safety. He

was recently appointed the Project Executive for the implementation of the Person-Centred Framework, a project designed to standardise and professionalise the home safety offering delivered by fire and rescue services. He is also the Eastern Region Programme Board Chair, a role in which he works to deliver collaboration between the six fire and rescue services in the eastern region.

Operationally, Mr. Hylton has taken command of numerous “gold” level incidents, including large, complex fires and significant flooding. His operational experience is underpinned by a level 7 qualification in strategic incident command and successful completion of the Multi Agency Gold Incident Command (MAGIC) course. He has a Masters Degree in Public Administration and completed the Executive Leadership Programme in 2010.

Across all elements of the selection process, Mr. Hylton showed himself to be an outstanding candidate who instilled great confidence within the panel, staff, colleagues and the independent assessor. Throughout his application and the selection process, Mr. Hylton demonstrated a sound understanding of the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service and the journey it has been on, as well as articulating a clear vision of how he would like to develop the service from here. His responses were clearly linked to the Authority’s strategic vision and priorities and the service’s values, as well as wider partnership agendas across the county. He demonstrated a leadership style appropriate for the organisation and its culture, and to deliver the further change still required within the service.

The terms and conditions on which the candidate is to be appointed

The National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services sets the minimum pay for Chief Fire Officers, based on the population of the area served. Historically, the Authority has paid slightly higher than the national minimum. From 1 January 2020, the minimum rate of pay for an area the size of Essex is £128,263 per annum, and the role was advertised at a salary of circa £150k per annum.

A pension will also be provided in accordance with the appropriate pension scheme, along with access to the service’s car scheme.

4. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive Role Profile

Appendix 2 – NFCC Leadership Framework

Appendix 3 – Report of the Independent Panel Member to the Police, Fire and Crime Panel

Appendix 4 – Rick Hylton CV