



Essex Fire Authority

Report to the Constituent Authorities of the meeting on 6 September 2017

The items reported below are the main issues considered by Essex Fire Authority at its meeting on 6 September 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.

1. Progress made against the Recommendations contained within the Lucas Report and outcomes of the Exit Review conducted by Sir Ken Knight

The Authority received and noted a report by the Service '*Evolving our Culture – Building on Firm Foundations*' which looked at progress against the recommendations contained within the Lucas Report.

The Authority received and noted the Final Report of the Expert Advisory Panel to Essex Fire Authority and Essex County Fire and Rescue Service. The Chairman of the Expert Advisory Panel paid credit to the Essex Fire Authority, for initiating an Independent Review into the culture of the Fire and Rescue Service in Essex and subsequently accepting all thirty-five recommendations made in the report. This had been a difficult process to manage and there was still a considerable amount of work to do in evolving the culture of the service. However a lot of work had been done to address the recommendations and the foundations were in place to build on for the future.

The Authority received and noted the Exit Review Report by Sir Ken Knight who also paid credit to the Chairman and the Authority for initiating the independent intervention and accepting all of the recommendations made. It was noted that although there was still work to do, the authority had come along way through the process and was now in a good position to conclude the work of the Expert Advisory Panel prior to the changes in governance arrangements taking place.

It was acknowledged that changing the culture of an organisation was a difficult process to go through. However it was recognised that significant progress had been made and there was a commitment to ongoing work to continue the journey.

The Authority recognised the contribution that the Expert Advisory Panel and Sir Ken Knight had made in the cultural transformation journey, registered its gratitude to each member of the Panel and Sir Ken Knight and agreed that the formal relationship could now be drawn to a close.

2. Annual Performance Report and Target Setting

The Authority received and noted the updates made to the report following on from recommendations made at its June meeting. The performance and commentary against the targets for 2016/17 was noted along with an update on targets for 2017/18.

The Service did not have universal control over all of the targets set, particularly some around community safety. However the Service was committed to using its expertise to try to influence preventative areas of work such as decreasing the number of killed and seriously injured people in road traffic collisions and reduce the number of fires.

Although some improvements were required in the priority areas of on-call recruitment and response times, the Authority noted explanations around why some of the targets had not been met.

3. Medium Term Financial Projections and Report on Progress against Efficiency Plan

The Authority considered a report which provided the annual review of the medium term financial projections and the first years report into progress against the Authority's efficiency plan agreed in September 2016.

The Authority noted that the Efficiency Plan had assumed an overall increase of 1.5% in the tax base for the year from 2016/17 to 2019/20. This had been increased to 1.75% for 2018/19 and 2019/20. The Billing Authorities own assumptions range between 1% and 1.5% reflecting their own more cautious approach.

The Authority noted that there was a risk associated with increases in pay in future. However with the current reserves it was unlikely to affect the Plan for this year but in future years this would need to be off-set against Council Tax or Government Funding.

It was noted that there was an ongoing risk regarding the recruitment and retention of on-call firefighters particularly in some parts of Essex.

The Authority noted the forecast projections of income and expenditure and the risks around achievement of the Efficiency Plan if higher pay settlements are not offset by increased Authority income. The Authority agreed that the strategy of using reserves to manage timing differences from the 2020 programme should continue in 2018/19 and that the basis of preparation for the 2018/19 budget should be a planned use of £684k of reserves. The updated 2016-2020 Efficiency Plan Report would be published.

4. Appointment of Chief Fire Officer

The Authority confirmed the appointment of Adam Eckley as Chief Fire Officer on a fixed term basis until the end of March 2018.