



Essex Fire Authority

Report to the Constituent Authorities of the meetings on 2 December 2015 and 13 January 2016

The items reported below are the main issues considered by Essex Fire Authority at its scheduled meeting on 2 December 2015 and an extraordinary meeting on 13 January 2016. 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 Report on the delivery of the work programme required to improve the culture within the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service

The Authority has considered its formal response to the findings and the recommendations made within the report of the Independent Cultural Review of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service conducted by Irene Lucas, received by the Authority in September 2015.

The Authority agreed in October to accept in full the 35 recommendations contained within the Independent Cultural Review report. The Acting Chief Fire Officer was instructed to produce an Implementation Plan for future consideration by the Authority, and to report progress to every meeting of the Authority for a minimum of 24 months.

In the seven weeks that have elapsed since the October meeting the Acting Chief Fire Officer and members of the Strategic Management Board have met with members of the Expert Advisory Panel on numerous occasions and have:

- Developed a clearer understanding of the current operating context within the Service and the relationship between the Lucas report, its findings and recommendations and the work already being undertaken as part of the Authority's Programme 2020.
- Determined a range of immediate priorities for the Service which includes an urgent review of the Service's management structure. This has now commenced and will report to the Authority early in the New Year.
- Discussed in detail the strategic challenges facing the Authority and the Service in the years ahead and how the Service strategy should be developed to ensure an appropriate and timely response to those challenges.

- Established a formal governance arrangement to ensure the wishes of the Essex Fire Authority are enacted, through a sub-group of the Principal Officers' Human Resources Committee.
- Commenced and refined the work required to develop a detailed Implementation Action Plan for consideration by the Authority. A draft plan has been prepared and will be considered in detail by the Expert Advisory Panel. It is expected that the Implementation Action Plan will be formerly reported to the EFA early in the New Year.
- Established an initial understanding of the relationship that should exist between Essex Fire Authority, the Service Management Team and the Expert Advisory Panel.
- Commenced the work to establish a number of employee engagement groups.

2. Organisational Change

The Authority has approved its approach to the management of organisational change within the Service. The approval covered:

1. the key principles which will underpin the Authority's approach to Organisational Change and the employee support options proposed;
2. how the process of Organisational Change will be applied so the Authority can ensure compliance with legislation, employee rights and good practice to support employee wellbeing;
3. the amendment of the Organisational Change policy of the Authority to incorporate a revised redundancy payment calculation for Firefighters to mirror the existing provision that is given to Support staff;
4. the option for the offer of early retirement of eligible operational employees in 2015/2016 as part of the change process; and
5. the funding implications in 2015/16 in relation to the early retirement option.

3. Essex County Fire and Rescue Service and Essex County Council Flood and Water Management Alliance

In January 2014 the ECFRS Senior Management Board directed that the Service should play a much more pro-active role in flood prevention and flood risk management. The main objectives of this partnership were to explore joint working initiatives and to find ways of maximising the information and resources for the benefit of all stakeholders. The work identified significant areas of shared responsibility and opportunity for flood prevention and flood impact mitigation activity. Current and on-going projects include –

- 17 flood alleviation schemes delivered across the County with three more programmed in 2015. Programming work for 2016 is ongoing.
- A dedicated flood risk management vehicle (to support the above activities).
- Support for ECFRS 'Critical Incident Room'.
- Operational crew involvement in flood alleviation.
- Surface water drainage information for operational crews.
- Dedicated flood website.
- Mobile device flood reporting 'App'.
- Automated warning signs at known highway flood sites.
- Countywide watercourse mapping exercise.
- Develop / maximise the impact of existing public interactions.
- Canvey Island task and finish group
- Local interventions in schools and homes

4. Fleet Workshops Redevelopment

For some years the condition of the Service's vehicle workshop at Lexden has been deteriorating. The nature of the building components make maintenance and refurbishment unduly complicated. The Fleet and Equipment Services Function underwent a service review in 2013 that resulted in the creation of the Fleet and Equipment Transformation Board that considered a number of recommendations and a way forward for Fleet Services into the future.

The Authority has agreed a way forward for one key work stream: Resolving the Property Challenge. The intention is to design and deliver a solution for a new facility on the Kelvedon Park site. Funding of £1.13m has been agreed to progress a construction programme to tender evaluation.

5. Changes to the Fire and Rescue Service in Essex, Southend and Thurrock – approval of proposals for the Authority's second public consultation

The Authority has considered proposals for changes to the organisational priorities of the Service and changes to the location and numbers of fire stations, fire engines and firefighters upon which the next public consultation will be based.

The decision on the future direction and resourcing of the Fire and Rescue Service in Essex, Southend and Thurrock will not be taken until June 2016 and therefore this second comprehensive public consultation exercise is an important part of the process to inform those important decisions.

The Authority has approved a second public consultation based upon:

- a. future investment in Prevention and Protection services in line with the outcomes of the Authority's first public consultation;
- b. three identified Operational Response model proposals
- c. changes to the level of Council Tax funding

and approved the consultation strategy.

**Councillor Anthony Hedley
Chairman**