

ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Essex County Fire & Rescue Service



Minutes of a Meeting of the Cultural Review Sub-Group of the Principal Officers Human Resources Committee held on Wednesday 7 January 2016 at 10.00am

Present:

Councillor A Holland	Chairman
Councillor B Aspinell	
Councillor A Erskine	
Councillor C Guglielmi	
Councillor C Kent	

The following Officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

Adam Eckley	Acting Chief Fire Officer
Lindsey Stafford-Scott	Director of HR and Organisational Development
Philip Thomson	Clerk and Monitoring Officer to Essex Fire Authority
Judith Dignum	Secretary to the Committee

1. Declarations of Interest

The Chairman reminded Members that they should declare any interests at this point or during consideration of the appropriate agenda item.

2. Progress Report on the delivery of the work programme required to improve the culture of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service

The Sub-Group received report EFA/001/16 by the Acting Chief Fire Officer which provided a progress update on action taken since the last meeting towards the delivery of the work programme required to improve the culture within Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS). Members noted that a revised version of the report had been circulated following the original despatch of the agenda for the meeting, to reflect the decision to withdraw the anticipated report by the Chairman of the Expert Advisory Panel in favour of a more detailed report, to be included on the agenda for the special meeting of Essex Fire Authority on 13 January.

In presenting the report, the Acting Chief Fire Officer advised that the first formal meeting of the Expert Advisory Panel would take place on 18 January, on the rise of the 2020 Programme Board. He also highlighted that, following the Sub-Group meeting, representatives from SOLACE were due to meet with members of the Principal Officers Human Resources Committee and the Clerk and Monitoring Officer to discuss the outline for an EFA member development programme.

The following points arose from consideration of the report:

- The need for high levels of participation in member development activities was emphasised, and the Sub-Group discussed how this may be achieved. One possibility would be the development of a set of expectations for EFA members, to be adopted formally by the Authority. This could include reference to participation in training opportunities. Any issues with regard to member engagement could be pursued through political groups and, if necessary, raised with the relevant Constituent Authority.
- Action was needed, both to assist Members in communicating their political role to ECFRS staff, and to ensure effective communication of the Authority's work to the Constituent Authorities.
- Work was underway to produce a single-page visual representation of the various work streams relating to future planning of the Service, to show how they fitted together.
- An update on the Retained Duty System (RDS) project would be submitted to the 13 April meeting of Essex Fire Authority.

The report was **noted**.

3. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Sub-Group would take place on Wednesday 10 February 2016 at 10.00am.

4. Urgent Business

The Chairman agreed to consideration of the following items of urgent business on the grounds that there was a need to update Members on developments since the despatch of the agenda for the meeting:

4A: Secondment of Member Services Officer

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer advised that Basildon Council had expressed an interest in the Member Services Officer secondment opportunity and had been asked to submit a firm proposal by 8 January.

In response to delays caused by staffing changes at Brentwood Borough Council, the Sub-Group agreed that the Council should be offered a further opportunity to consider the secondment, albeit with an immediate response required.

4B: Transfer of ministerial responsibility for fire and rescue policy

The Acting Chief Fire Officer updated the Sub-Group on the recent decision by the Government to transfer responsibility for fire and rescue service policy from the Department for Communities and Local Government to the Home Office. The Rt Hon Mike Penning MP, formerly a firefighter with Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, had been appointed as Minister for Policing, Fire, Criminal Justice and Victims with effect from 5 January 2016.

5. Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved

That, having decided that, in all the circumstance, the public interest in maintaining the exemption (and discussing the matter in private) outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as specified in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

6. Early Retirement Options: Application for Early Retirement

The Sub-Group considered report EFA/002/16 by the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development which presented an application for early retirement received from a Principal Officer. A decision was sought as to whether to recommend the application for approval by Essex Fire Authority at its meeting on 13 January.

The report further advised that an expression of interest in early retirement had been received from another Principal Officer. As this had not progressed sufficiently for consideration at the meeting, authority was sought for any subsequent application to be submitted direct to Essex Fire Authority on 13 January, without further reference to the Sub-Group.

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer advised that responsibility for making recommendations on issues such as that currently before the Sub-Group had been delegated to the Principal Officers Human Resources Committee. However, as the Sub-Group comprised members of that Committee, it could proceed on this occasion, with more formal arrangements to be put in place for the future if required.

The Sub-Group gave detailed consideration to the business case for the application, noting that the financial implications could be met from within the previously approved provision for meeting costs associated with the ongoing staffing review.

The following points arose from consideration of the report:

- The Acting Chief Fire Officer confirmed his responsibility for the realignment of areas of work associated with posts to be discontinued, offering assurance that a satisfactory approach had been identified in this case.
- The Clerk and Monitoring Officer confirmed that, although law on the issue was complex, in general it was not considered good practice to re-engage in a consultancy role someone who had recently left an organisation by virtue of the discontinuation of their post.

Resolved:

1. That the application for early retirement identified in report EFA/002/16 be recommended for approval by Essex Fire Authority at its meeting on 13 February 2016.

2. That any subsequent application for early retirement arising from the expression of interest identified in report EFA/002/16 be submitted direct to the meeting of Essex Fire Authority on 13 January 2016, without further reference to the Sub-Group.
3. That, if required, appropriate formal governance arrangements (delegated authority) be put in place to allow the Sub-Group to consider similar applications made by Principal Officers and make recommendations to Essex Fire Authority.

7. Urgent Exempt Business

The Chairman agreed to consideration of the following item of urgent business on the grounds that there was a need to update Members on developments since the despatch of the agenda for the meeting.

7A: Chief Fire Officer

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer updated the Sub-Group on the current position with regard to the Chief Fire Officer. In so doing, he emphasised the need for complete confidentiality with regard to the matters raised.

The meeting closed at 11.45am.

Signed.....

Chairman
10 February 2016