

## SHIRE OF NORTHAM

### MINUTES OF THE BUSH FIRE ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL HELD ON 13<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2010 COMMENCING AT 6.04PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS.

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#### 1. DECLARATION OF OPENING AND WELCOME

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed all delegates.

#### 2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None declared

#### 3. ATTENDANCE

##### DELEGATES (VOTING RIGHTS)

Bakers Hill Brigade  
Clackline/Muresk Brigade  
Clackline/Muresk Brigade  
Grass Valley Brigade

Inkpen Brigade  
Irishtown Brigade  
Northam Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service  
Southern Brook Brigade  
Wundowie Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service  
Shire of Northam

Mr C Barrington  
**Mr B Wilding (6:20pm)**  
**Mr R Russell (proxy till 6:20pm)**  
Mr R Marris  
B Smith  
Mr S Kuiper  
Mr D Russell  
Mr G Montgomery  
Mr P Antonio  
Ms A Brucciani  
Cr S Pollard

##### EXECUTIVE OFFICERS (NON-VOTING RIGHTS)

Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer (West)  
Department of Environment and Conservation  
FESA  
Shire of Northam

Mr G Ashman  
Mr K Pollack  
Mr L Mincherton  
Mr P Steven  
Mr F McQuistan

#### 4. APOLOGIES

Mr T Smith, Mr P Gentle

#### 5. CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

R Russell, Seconded R Marris – carried.

#### 6. AGENDA ITEMS

7.1 Total Fire Bans

7.2 Fire Management Plan (contacts update)

7.3 Shire of Northam Standpipes

7.4 Electronic Voice recorder

7.5 Fire Brigade Local Law

7.6 Brigade responses on Extreme fire danger days

7.7 Risk to Resource

## **7. GENERAL BUSINESS**

### **DEC**

Provided an update of their Hazard reduction Burning and the Conditions that they were conducting their burning under whereby some fires were burning overnight regardless of the temperature.

### **FESA**

Linton Mincherton discussed the following topics

- Total fire bans
- Training
- Available resources (Aircraft, ICV)
- Risk to resource
- Season potential

### **S Kuiper**

Sim Kuiper discussed the following

- Potentially a bad year due to dryness.

### **R Marris**

Richard Marris discussed the following

- The Shire has been looking at subdivisions – In an effort to create alternate emergency access routes in the event of emergencies.
- Fire appliance preparedness
- Potential fire danger due to being dry conditions

### **B Wilding**

Blair Wilding discussed the following

- FCO capacity to issue permits on days of Very high or above

### **B Smith**

Clackline Brigade is not happy to sign off on the specific FCO responsibilities that were requested in the Shire mail-out.

### **D Russell**

Consider a database of permits that have been issued on a particular day in the Shire, on-line. General support for this.

### **F McQuistan**

Felix McQuistan discussed the following

- ESL application has included an expanded budget, subject to FESA approval.
- Local Emergency Management Arrangements.
- Training courses
- Risk to resource
- CESC Position
- Firebreaks

## 7.1 Amendments to Total Fire Ban Legislation

Name of Applicant:	Internal Staff Report
File Ref:	5.1.3.1
Officer:	Felix McQuistan
Officer Interest	Nil
Policy:	Bush Fires Act 1954
Voting:	Simple Majority
Date:	September 2010

### **PURPOSE**

To receive a report from FESA outlining the proposed changes to the declaration of "Total Fire Bans".

### **BACKGROUND**

In 2009 the Bush Fires Act 1954 was amended to allow for the declaration of a "Total Fire Ban" previously this was not possible under the Act and with the preliminary outcomes of the Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission FESA made recommendations to the State Government for some amendments to be made to ensure continued public safety on days when fire fighting activities would be particularly difficult in nature

### **STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

N/A

### **CONFORMITY WITH THE PLAN FOR THE FUTURE**

Key Result Area – Land Use & Infrastructure – Outcome 6 – Adequate provisions for Bush Fire Protection are provided, monitored and maintained.

### **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

N/A

### **OFFICER'S COMMENT**

Attachment 1 is a copy of a letter from FESA relating to the further refinement of the "Total Fire Bans" now capable of being put in place by FESA on days where the forecast weather is of particular concern. Of particular importance is the suggestion that Harvest and Vehicle movement has been impacted upon by the declaration of a ban for an unacceptable length of time.

*LM advised that when a total fire ban is imposed by FESA, harvesting will be allowed to continue until the fire danger index is 32. At that point, the Chief will call for a harvest ban by the Shire of Northam. The harvest ban website will show where exemptions are granted. At 35, FESA can impose a harvest ban in any case. Last year 3 total fire bans were imposed and one was at the time of the Toodyay fire, the other 2 were not really needed here.*

*RM advised this will be considered carefully so as not to place the Shire at unacceptable risk.*

### **OFFICERS RECCOMENDATION**

- **That Council write to brigades and FCO's advising them of the proposed Changes to the Total Fire Ban legislation.**

**Moved R Russell, Seconded G Montgomery – carried 9/0**

## 7.2 Fire Management Plan Contacts Update

Name of Applicant:	Internal Staff Report
File Ref:	5.1.3.1
Officer:	Felix McQuistan
Officer Interest	Nil
Policy:	Bush Fire Management Plan
Voting:	Simple Majority
Date:	September 2010

### PURPOSE

To update the existing Contacts Directory for the Shire of Northam Bushfire Management Plan

### BACKGROUND

The current adopted Bushfire Management Plan was adopted in 2009 as a "Live" document with the expectation that from time to time amendments would need to be made paying particular importance to the relevance of the contacts directory contained within.

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Emergency Management Act 2005  
State Emergency Management Policy Statement 7

### CONFORMITY WITH THE PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Key Result Area – Land Use & Infrastructure – Outcome 6 – Adequate provisions for Bush Fire Protection are provided, monitored and maintained.

### BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

N/A

### OFFICER'S COMMENT

Attached is a copy of the current Bushfire Contact Directory.

As there may have been changes to the Officers and other matters in relation to the Current Directory All Brigades are requested to update the directory for inclusion in the 2010 / 2011 reprint for the brigades.

Upon advice from FESA it is also advised that each radio operator should be issued only one radio call sign with an exception of Facilities and Appliances, where the call sign is issued to that particular item.

The above recommendation is based upon the need to ensure that there is no confusion within the Bush Fire Brigades as to who they are talking to.

Currently there are Members of the brigades who will change call sign based upon which private vehicle they are driving or where they are located.

This practice lends itself to confusion of brigades and officers where familiarity of call signs is discarded and another call sign is being used.

### BFAC RECOMENDATION

- **That Council write to all Brigades and advise that they are to update the attached contact list allowing one call sign per member where that member has one or more radios.**

### Moved R Marris, Seconded G Montgomery – 9/0

### 7.3 Standpipes

Name of Applicant:	Internal Staff Report
File Ref:	5.1.3.1
Officer:	Felix McQuistan
Officer Interest	Nil
Policy:	Bush Fires Act 1954
Voting:	Simple Majority
Date:	September 2010

#### PURPOSE

For Council to develop a strategy to best deal with the current Standpipes and their use within the Shire of Northam.

#### BACKGROUND

Within the Shire of Northam there are currently 20 standpipes, of these 2 are supplied via a tank storage system; either due to a lack of existing mains pressure or the absence of reticulated water altogether.

The remaining 18 Standpipes are located strategically throughout the shire to supply water for fire fighting, road works also being utilised by some residents without access to a reticulated mains supply, either by utilising contracted water carters or by their own means.

#### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

N/A

#### CONFORMITY WITH THE PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Key Result Area – Land Use & Infrastructure – Outcome 6 – Adequate provisions for Bush Fire Protection are provided, monitored and maintained.

Key Result Area – The Shire Organization – Outcome 6 – The Shire of Northam operates in a financially sustainable manner.

#### BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Over the past three years the Shire of Northam has operated standpipes at a loss due to unexplained loss of water from existing standpipes, unreported damage and wear and tear on Standpipes. (As below)

		07/08	08/09	09/10	3 year Total
Expense	Maintenance Charges	-15,357.64	-9519.86	-13519.86	-38397.36
Expense	Water Charges (usage)	-17,569.69	-13071.69	-13701.06	-44342.44
Income	Water Reimbursement	4809.63	7519.55	9496.83	21826.01
Net		-28,117.70	-15,072.00	-17,724.09	-60,913.79

The costs associated with modification to existing standpipes to a secure swipe card system are based upon Quotation between \$5- \$6000 per standpipe (including fitting) and a further cost of \$15 per swipe card to be purchased in lots of 100.

Additional costs may also be incurred where a standpipe is decommissioned (approximately \$500) or reconfigured for fire fighting purposes only (replacement

with a Ground Hydrant). \$3-\$7000, based upon the need for back flow prevention device requirements.

Supplementary to the above the cost of replacing existing standpipe locks with new locks based upon the Shire master key would be in the vicinity of \$3500 which will include the replacement of damaged or missing locking covers.

## **OFFICER'S COMMENT**

### **1. Generally:**

Currently the Shire of Northam are using key locked standpipes with an honour book for water access, there are over 150 keys that have been issued to residents or private contractors which enables them unrestricted access to water from any of the shire's standpipes.

The honour system has not proven to be an effective system to monitor water usage from standpipes and on numerous occasions staff have found that the locking cover has been removed permanently from standpipes the ability of staff to adequately track water usage and on bill appropriately has become increasingly difficult; accordingly better system will need to be adopted.

Staff have been able to locate a solar powered swipe card system which will effectively track water usage by residents that have been issued with a card and enable the shire to bill water users appropriately.

The unit is available in two configurations either fully automated where the unit is configured with a wireless router to digitally transmit usage data directly to the shire office or manually downloadable where the memory of the units need to be read directly by laptop via a serial port on the standpipe.

### **2. Fire**

For fire fighting purposes the Bush fire brigades have the capacity to access other water from the reticulated main through Ground Hydrants (where available) utilising a Hydrant standpipe and Key. In areas where the installation of Ground hydrants is not possible or feasible it is recommended that standpipes be removed from general service and are made available only for Emergencies or Shire of Northam business.

Where a standpipe has been converted to a swipe card system brigades will also be issue a card for access which will enable the shire to adequately track water usage in relation to fire fighting purposes.

### **3. Current and Future Development**

The current trend for developers to be required to install Ground Hydrants where a reticulated supply is available has seen a marked increase in the availability of water throughout the western portion of the Shire, although in some subdivisions where the reticulated supply has not been available existing standpipes have been identified in fire Management plans as a suitable source of water for emergencies.

The trend towards the requirement for developments to include reticulated water has further outdated the need for standpipes in many areas; as residents in these areas no longer require access to other supplies of water for domestic or emergency use.

In future developments it would be recommended that the standpipes be removed in favour of replacement with Ground hydrants which are readily accessed by fire fighting appliances in the event of an emergency.

Location	Recommendation	Justification statement
Bodeguero Way Wundowie	Retain for emergencies and shire use only	Existing Ground Hydrant service available within 500m
Chedaring Road	Swipe card	Strategic supply for carriers and residents
Keane street Bakers Hill	Remove	Existing Ground Hydrant service available within 200m
Great Eastern Highway Clackline	Swipe card	Strategic supply for carriers and residents
Spencers Brook Road Spencers Brook	Retain for emergencies and shire use only	Existing Ground Hydrant service available within 200m
Northam Toodyay road Katrine	Swipe card?????? (Toodyay standpipe)	Strategic supply for carriers and residents
Katrine road Katrine	Retain for Emergencies Only	Receives limited use
Clarke Street Northam	remove	Existing Ground Hydrant service available within 50m
Irishtown Road Irishtown	Retain for Emergencies Only	Receives limited use
Chitbin Road Jennapullin	Retain for Emergencies Only	Receives limited use
Southern Brook Road Southern brook	Swipe card	Strategic supply for carriers and residents
Smith Road Bobakine	Retain for Emergencies Only	Insufficient supply to modify existing
Peel Terrace Northam Depot	Retain for works usage	Shire Works Purposes and Central Supply if required
Hunter road Seabrook	Retain for emergencies and shire use only	Existing Ground Hydrant service available
Carter Road Grass Valley	Swipe card	Strategic supply for carriers and residents
Meenar South Road Grass Valley	Retain for Emergencies Only	Receives limited use
Meiklem Road Grass Valley	Retain for Emergencies Only	Receives limited use
Keane street Grass Valley	Retain for emergencies and shire use only	Existing Ground Hydrant service available within 500m
Avro Anson Road Mokine	Retain for Emergencies Only	Insufficient supply to modify existing
O'neil Road Southern Brook	Retain for Emergencies Only	Receives limited use
Grass Valley North Road Southern Brook ??		Receives limited use

## BFAC RECOMENDATION

- That the BFAC does not object to the proposal to replace the current honour system with a digital swipe card system on four Standpipes at strategic locations around the shire.
- That BFAC recommend that the following standpipes be retained (using the swipe card system) for use by the general community.

Location	Recommendation
Chedaring Road	Swipe card
Great Eastern Highway Clackline	Swipe card
Southern Brook Road Southern brook	Swipe card
Carter Road Grass Valley	Swipe card

## Move Simon, Seconded P Antonio – carried (8/1)

## 7.4 Digital Electronic Recording Device

Name of Applicant:	Internal Staff Report
File Ref:	5.1.3.1
Officer:	Felix McQuistan
Officer Interest	Nil
Policy:	Digital Electronic Recording Device
Voting:	Simple Majority
Date:	September 2010

### **PURPOSE**

To consider a recommendation from the Clackline Muresk Bush fire brigade that consideration be given to the purchase of an electronic recording device to be used in lieu of FCO's keeping a fire incident diary.

### **BACKGROUND**

It is a recommendation of recent Coronial enquiries that all FCO's and incident controllers keep a diary of their actions and activities during the event of a fire.

The purpose of the diary is to appropriately record activities and the decision making process of the FCO's in their efforts to control and extinguish fires.

These notes are expected to be utilised at the conclusion of incident in the event of an investigation or enquiry such as the recent Toodyay MIR (major incident review)

### **STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

*Nil*

### **CONFORMITY WITH THE PLAN FOR THE FUTURE**

Key Result Area – Land Use & Infrastructure – Outcome 6 – Adequate provisions for Bush Fire Protection are provided, monitored and maintained.

### **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

If agreed upon the cost of an appropriate machine to record 4 channels would be in the vicinity of \$8000 with further costs associated with the installation and supplementary incidentals.

### **OFFICER'S COMMENT**

The Shire of Northam has originally purchased an electronic recording device which relied upon a tape recording system which also had a recorded voice to dictate the date and time stamp, the duration of this stamp has proven excessive and results in much of the recorded radio traffic being over written and rendered useless.

FESA have advised Shire staff that they would not support the purchase of a recording device of this nature prior to the rollout of the WAERN and further to this have advised that the purchase of this device after the WAERN rollout would not be considered essential due in part to the minimal number of occasions where it would be utilised.

FESA have also advised that provided FCO's take appropriate notes in a Fire Diary or other medium during fire events the benefit of such a device is minimal.

It should also be noted that many conversations at a fire incident are not made over radio these include telephone conversations, and face to face and due to the nature they would not be recorded in this instance, accordingly it should be noted that the decision making process would also not be recorded in the event of an incident I.e:



If the FCO receives information that there is a wind change imminent and directs crews to relocate from an area, only a direction over the radio would be recorded. In this situation it would be suggested that there is no record of the decision making process to refer actions back to.

*The tape recorder is limited. There is funding from Lotterywest. The device can record off channel 43, the radio traffic. It is used to supplement notes. One unit would cover the whole network.*

#### **OFFICERS RECOMMENDATION**

- **That BFAC inform Council that the existing method of Incident Controllers recording activities in a log book at fires is appropriate for the majority of fires.**
- **That BFAC recommend to Council that alternate funding be sought for the purchase of an electronic recording device for radio traffic.**

**B Wilding / B Smith - carried**

## 7.5 Fire Brigade Local Law

Name of Applicant:	Internal Staff Report
File Ref:	5.1.3.1
Officer:	Felix McQuistan
Officer Interest	Nil
Policy:	Fire Brigade Local Law
Voting:	Simple Majority
Date:	September 2010

### PURPOSE

To consider the previous Shire of Northam Local Law relating to the establishment and maintenance of Bush fire brigades.

### BACKGROUND

In 2007 the Shire of Northam and Town of Northam Amalgamated, during this amalgamation a review was conducted into the existing local laws including the Shire of Northam. *Establishment, Maintenance and Equipment of Bush Fire Brigades Local Law*

At the time of amalgamation it was recommended that the Bill Harris provide advice in relation to the replacement of the existing Shire Local Law, as he was preparing a report on the Shire of Northam Bush fire organization.

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

*Bush Fire's Act 1954*

*Local Government Act 1995*

### CONFORMITY WITH THE PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Key Result Area – Land Use & Infrastructure – Outcome 6 – Adequate provisions for Bush Fire Protection are provided, monitored and maintained.

### BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Some costs associated with the advertising of review of a Local Law

### OFFICER'S COMMENT

Regardless of the Existing Shire of Northam" *Establishment, Maintenance and Equipment of Bush Fire Brigades Local Law*" It appears that the recommendation from Mr Harris in relation to the establishment of a Local Law was to produce a Bush Fire Brigades Administration manual for adoption by Council as Policy to govern the operation of the brigades.

The existing Administration Procedures Manual appears to have been developed for the purpose of governing the bush fire brigades as it is clear that the previous Shire of Northam Local Law is outdated.

### BFAC RECOMMENDATION

**That this item be deferred until the next BFAC meeting, to allow legal action to be obtained on Section 41(1) of the BF Act.**

**Moved D Russell, B Wilding – carried.**

## 7.6 Response on Extreme Fire Danger Days

Name of Applicant:	Internal Staff Report
File Ref:	5.1.3.1
Officer:	Felix McQuistan
Officer Interest	Nil
Policy:	Extreme Fire Danger Response
Voting:	Simple Majority
Date:	September 2010

### PURPOSE

To consider recommending to Council a policy for brigades in relation to response and readiness on days of Extreme Fire Danger.

### BACKGROUND

Currently the Shire of Northam does not have a policy to address the need for heightened readiness on days of extreme fire danger, in the past there have been difficulties in turning out brigades on days of extreme fire danger.

Recent events have also underlined the need to define the roles of the brigades in relation to the turning out of resources to another local government district which could seriously affect the operational readiness of the Shire of Northam.

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Nil

### CONFORMITY WITH THE PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Key Result Area – Land Use & Infrastructure – Outcome 6 – Adequate provisions for Bush Fire Protection are provided, monitored and maintained.

### BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

N/A

### OFFICER'S COMMENT

It has been highlighted by Brigades that there is a need for heightened levels of preparedness on days of extreme fire danger to enable a more appropriate response however It may be considered inappropriate for the Council to adopt a strict policy in relation to an expectation that volunteers may be required to make themselves immediately available to turn out to fires on days of extreme fire danger.

There is also a clear need to identify the roles of the brigades and officers in relation to mobilisation to assist another local government on days of extreme fire danger; a recent example was the Toodyay fire where differing mobilisation strategies were evident within brigades.

It is considered standard practice in most Local Government areas that where a brigade is requested to turn out to a fire within that Shire the activation may be requested by any Incident controller regardless of location however where the Local Government Brigades are requested to assist another Local Government the responsibility lies with the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer or the Chief Executive officer of the Shire to release resources from within the Shire to assist, this process is to ensure that an overall view of the Shire's response capability is assessed prior to their release.

*DR – intention was to have SOPs on what is expected of the Brigades at certain times eg catastrophic fire danger.*

*Form a working party to look at SOPs and checklists for use during catastrophic / extreme.*

*Eg Council will:*

*Convey predicted weather pattern to all FCOs, advise of evacuation centres,*

#### **BFAC RECOMMENDATION**

- 1. That a working party is formed to look at SOPs and checklists for use during times of extreme or catastrophic fire danger to prepare for a level of heightened operational readiness on days of extreme fire danger, including consideration that Brigade Captains be contacted on days of extreme fire danger to remind them of the need to be operationally prepared.**
- 2. That Council write to Brigades advising them that any request from an incident controller for a Northam Shire appliance to attend a fire outside of the Shire of Northam must be approved by the CBFCO / CEO of the Shire of Northam.**

**Move P Antonio, Seconded S Kuiper – 9/0**

## 7.7 Risk to Resource

Name of Applicant:	Internal Staff Report
File Ref:	5.1.3.1
Officer:	Felix McQuistan
Officer Interest	Nil
Policy:	Risk to Resource
Voting:	Simple Majority
Date:	8 June 2010

### PURPOSE

For the Brigades to provide input as to the review and further development of the Shire of Northam Risk to Resource.

### BACKGROUND

The review of the Shire of Northam Risk to Resource is overdue as such brigades are requested to provide two members to provide feedback to enable staff and FESA to develop a Draft Risk to resource document for the next BFAC to consider for adoption.

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Nil

### CONFORMITY WITH THE PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Key Result Area – Land Use & Infrastructure – Outcome 6 – Adequate provisions for Bush Fire Protection are provided, monitored and maintained.

### BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

N/A

### OFFICER'S COMMENT

There is a clear need for the Brigades to be consulted in relation to the development of the Risk to Resource as such it should be considered appropriate to set a date for a meeting with delegates from each brigade being given the opportunity to provide input into the risk to resource draft

*LM provided maps for Brigades to take away to look at prior to the meeting. Looking at early afternoon.*

### OFFICERS RECOMMENDATION

- That the brigades nominate 2 members each to attend a drafting of the Shire of Northam Risk to Resource document
- That a date of the 26<sup>th</sup> October 2010 be set for a preliminary drafting of the Risk to Resource.

**Moved R Marris, Seconded B Smith – carried.**

**8. NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED**

Post fire season.

**9. DECLARATION OF CLOSURE**

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8:12pm

“I certify that the Minutes of the Bush Fire Advisory Committee Meeting held on 13 September 2010 have been confirmed as a true and correct record.”

\_\_\_\_\_ Presiding member

\_\_\_\_\_ Date