

**MINUTES
BUSH FIRE ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL
TO BE HELD ON TUESDAY 10th JUNE 2014
AT 6:00PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

1. DECLARATION OF OPENING AND WELCOME

The meeting was declared open at 6 pm.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

3. ATTENDANCE

Bakers Hill Brigade	Geoff Both
Clackline/Muresk Brigade	Blair Wilding
Grass Valley Brigade	Luke Gentle
Inkpen Brigade	Sim Kuiper
Irishtown Brigade	David Russell
Jennapullin Brigade	Aaron Smith
Southern Brook Brigade	Paul Antonio
Northam Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service	Greg Montgomery
Wundowie Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service	Apologies
Shire of Northam	Ulo Rumjantsev

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS (NON-VOTING RIGHTS)

Chief Bush Fire Control Officer	Garry Shepherdson
Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer (East)	Rob Herzer
Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer (West)	Mathew Macqueen
Department of Fire and Emergency Services	Apologies
Shire Executive Manager Development Services	Phil Steven
Shire Community Emergency Services Coordinator	Felix McQuistan

PUBLIC GALLERY

David Gossage	Association of Volunteer Bushfire Brigades
Deiter Bartels	Association of Volunteer Bushfire Brigades
Murray McGreggor	Irishtown Briagde
Robert Stockman	Clackline Muresk Bushfire Briagde

4. APOLOGIES

Chris Barrington
Terry Little
Sven Andersen (DFES)
Michael Pasotti (DPaW)

5. CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Recommendation

That the minutes for the BFAC meeting held on the 8th October 2013 be received.

Moved R Herzer Seconded B Wilding

Carried

Recommendation arising from previous minutes:

That BFAC is held on the fourth Tuesday of June being the 23rd of June 2015 and all brigades be directed to have held their meetings by the first weekend of June 2015.

Moved B Wilding Seconded A Smith

Carried

6. AGENDA ITEMS

6.1 Brigade Fire Control Officers

Name of Applicant:	Internal Staff Report
File Ref:	5.1.3.1
Officer:	Felix McQuistan
Officer Interest	Nil
Policy:	
Voting:	Simple Majority
Date:	June 2014

PURPOSE

To consider recommending to Council the appointment of nominated Volunteers to the position of Fire Control Officer in accordance with the *Bush Fires Act 1954*.

BACKGROUND

As with previous years, all Brigades have nominated members for the position of Fire Control Officer at their Annual General Meetings in addition to the election of other brigade officers.

The nominations for the position of Fire Control Officer are forwarded via BFAC to Council for their endorsement for the pending Fire Season.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Council are Responsible for the appointment of Fire Control Officers in accordance Section 38 of the *Bush Fires Act 195* -

38. Local government may appoint bush fire control officer

- (1) *A local government may from time to time appoint such persons as it thinks necessary to be its bush fire control officers under and for the purposes of this Act, and of those officers shall subject to section 38A(2) appoint 2 as the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer and the Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer who shall be first and second in seniority of those officers, and subject thereto may determine the respective seniority of the other bush fire control officers appointed by it.*

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

Minor advertising cost associated with the appointment of the Positions.

OFFICER'S COMMENT

As with previous years the Positions of Fire Control Officers are put forward to Council after endorsed by BFAC. Accordingly, BFAC is requested to make a recommendation for the following positions:

Inkpen	Sim Kuiper
	Sorren Nielsen
	Clive Owen
Bakers Hill	Ulo Ramjantsev
	Steven Gray
Clackline	Mathew MacQueen
	Mathew Letch
	Blair Wilding
	Sue Brooker
	Ray Russell
Grass Valley	Richard Marris
	Phil Gentle
	Paul Reynolds
	Alf Brown
	Garry Shepherdson
Jennapullin	Aaron Smith
	Trevor Smith
	Brett Smith
Southern Brook	Paul Antonio
Irishtown	David Russell
	Robert Herzer
	Don French
Shire of Northam	Felix McQuistan

BFAC RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

- 1. That Council appoint the above-nominated People to the Position of Fire Control Officer for the Shire of Northam.**
- 2. That Council appoint 3 additional FCO's to Bakers Hill subject to their successful completion of the FCO course being**
 - Chris Barrington**
 - Rod McGreevy**
 - Geoff Both**

Moved B Wilding Seconded D Russell

Carried

6.2 Fire Break Order

Name of Applicant:	Internal Staff Report
File Ref:	5.1.3.1
Officer:	Felix McQuistan
Officer Interest	Nil
Policy:	Fire Break Order
Voting:	Simple Majority
Date:	June 2014

PURPOSE

To consider recommending to Council the attached Fire Break Order for the 2014-15 fire season.

BACKGROUND

As with previous years, all Brigades have been provided the opportunity for input into the development of the Shire of Northam Fire Break Order.

In an effort to align the Shire of Northam firebreak order with best industry practice the proposed firebreak order has been amended to align with the guidelines as set out in "Planning for Bushfire Protection".

Included as an appendix is an extract of "Planning for Bushfire Protection.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Council are Responsible for the development and enforcement of Firebreak requirements in accordance with Section 33 of the *Bush Fires Act 195* -

33. Local government may require occupier of land to plough or clear fire-break

- (1) Subject to subsection (2) a local government at any time, and from time to time, may, and if so required by the Minister shall, as a measure for preventing the outbreak of a bush fire, or for preventing the spread or extension of a bush fire which may occur, give notice in writing to an owner or occupier of land situate within the district of the local government or shall give notice to all owners or occupiers of land in its district by publishing a notice in the *Government Gazette* and in a newspaper circulating in the area requiring him or them as the case may be within a time specified in the notice to do or to commence to do at a time so specified all or any of the following things —
 - (a) to plough, cultivate, scarify, burn or otherwise clear upon the land fire-breaks in such manner, at such places, of such dimensions, and to such number, and whether in parallel or otherwise, as the local government may and is hereby empowered to determine and as are specified in the notice, and thereafter to maintain the fire-breaks clear of inflammable matter;
 - (b) to act as and when specified in the notice with respect to anything which is upon the land, and which in the opinion of the local government or its duly authorised officer, is or is likely to be conducive to the outbreak of a bush fire or the spread or extension of a bush fire,

and the notice may require the owner or occupier to do so —

- (c) as a separate operation, or in co-ordination with any other person, carrying out a similar operation on adjoining or neighbouring land; and
- (d) in any event, to the satisfaction of either the local government or its duly authorised officer, according to which of them is specified in the notice

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

Cost associated with the advertising of the Shire of Northam firebreak order.

OFFICER'S COMMENT

As with previous years the BFAC is provided with an opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed firebreak order.

Attached is a copy of the proposed firebreak order, which has been amended to align with the "Planning for Bushfire Protection" document.

Specifically the amendments to the firebreak are included as below;

- Firebreak widths are amended to 3 metres in width;
- Firebreak overhead clearance of 4 metres,
- Building protection zone increased to 20 metres (previously 15 metres).

Whilst the vertical clearance is not included in the firebreak section of Planning for bushfire protection, it is included with "fire service access routes".

It is recognised that brigades utilise firebreaks in many areas as access for appliances and an overhead clearance of the current firebreaks is needed to ensure that appliance damage is minimised and fire-fighter safety is enhanced.

Some further amendments have been made to ensure there is no ambiguity with the Fire Break Order; Amendments are italicized and coloured in orange within the draft firebreak order as attached to this agenda.

BFAC RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

- 1. That Council adopt the same firebreak order as the 21013-14 season for the 2014 - 2015 fire season subject to minor amendments.**

Moved D Russell

Seconded B Wilding

Carried

- 2. That Council engage in an education campaign utilising social and other media to ensure residents are fully aware of the requirements in relation to fire with particular focus on the below points:**

- **Requirement to obtain permission from the Shire to burn road verges**
- **The responsibility of residents to take steps to extinguish fires burning on their property.**
- **Fire fighting services in the Shire of Northam is made up of volunteers**
- **Encouraging residents to become volunteers**
- **Road rules in respect to emergency services vehicles**
- **Aspects of basic fire safety for residents**

Moved D Russell

Seconded G Montgomery

Carried

- 3. Move "general advice" in relation to burning verges from the back portion of the firebreak order to a more prominent location within the firebreak order.**

Moved G Both

Seconded G Montgomery

Carried

6.3 CHIEF FIRE CONTROL OFFICER and DEPUTY (EAST)

Name of Applicant:	Internal Staff Report
File Ref:	5.1.3.1
Officer:	Felix McQuistan
Officer Interest	Nil
Policy:	Bush Fire Administration Procedure Manual
Voting:	Simple Majority
Date:	June 2014

PURPOSE

To consider recommending to Council the appointment of Volunteers to the position of Chief and Deputy Chief Fire Control Officer in accordance with the *Bush Fires Act 1954*.

BACKGROUND

In keeping with the Harris report Recommendations to Council the officer position of Chief and Deputy Chief Fire Control Officers are to be appointed for a period of two (2) years.

As with the appointment of the Deputy (West) in 2013 there is a need to reconsider the positions of the Positions of Chief and Deputy (East)

At recent AGM's there has been limited interest in the positions of Chief or Deputy Chief (East) and BFAC are in a position to reappoint the incumbent officers for a further term of 2 years in line with Council Policy. The positions as currently held are as listed below:

DCBFCO WEST: Mathew Macqueen (incumbent 2013-2015)
DCBFCO EAST Robert Herzer (Incumbent 2012-2014)
CBFCO Garry Shepherdson (Incumbent 2012-2014)

As with Councils appointment last year the Deputy Chief and Chief Fire Control Officer positions are to be appointed for a period of two year terms however there is a requirement to appoint a Chief and Deputy (East) for a 2 year term.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Council are Responsible for the appointment of Fire Control Officers in accordance Section 38 of the *Bush Fires Act 195* -

38. Local government may appoint bush fire control officer

- (1) *A local government may from time to time appoint such persons as it thinks necessary to be its bush fire control officers under and for the purposes of this Act, and of those officers shall subject to section 38A(2) appoint 2 as the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer and the Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer who shall be first and second in seniority of those officers, and subject thereto may determine the respective seniority of the other bush fire control officers appointed by it.*

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

Minor advertising cost associated with the appointment of the Position.

OFFICER’S COMMENT

As the appointment of the Chief Fire Control Officer with previous years, the Position of Deputy Chief are put forward to Council after endorsed by BFAC. Accordingly, BFAC is requested to make a recommendation for the following position:

Deputy Chief Fire Control Officer East	Robert Herzer
Chief Bushfire Control Officer	Garry Shepherdson

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

- 1. That Council appoint the above-nominated Fire Control Officers to another term of two years in their respective positions.**

Moved D Russell Seconded G Montgomery

Carried

6.4 Brigade Membership and Availability.

Name of Applicant:	Internal Staff Report
File Ref:	5.1.3.1
Officer:	Felix McQuistan
Officer Interest	Nil
Policy:	Nil
Voting:	Simple Majority
Date:	June 2014

PURPOSE

To recommend to Council an avenue to increase the Capacity for the Shire of Northam to combat fires.

BACKGROUND

Brigades have highlighted considerable hurdles in relation to their capacity to attend bushfire incidents during the fire season in particular brigades have highlighted shortfalls of available members during business hours, in addition to hurdles being faced recruiting and retaining volunteers to join brigades.

Many volunteer organisations are reporting similar reducing trends in volunteerism throughout the state and a collaborative approach is required to overcome the difficulties faced by brigades and emergency services throughout the district.

This is a complex and un-isolated issue and there is a need to develop a long-term strategy that will improve the capacity of brigades to respond to emergency incidents.

It has been suggested that to enable the brigades to develop a plan for improving delivery of services it would be beneficial to engage a contractor to conduct some market research in relation to volunteerism in the shire of northam. With the data provided this would enable the brigades to assist in the development of a volunteer retention and recruitment strategy.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Bush Fires Act 1954

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

There will be a nominal cost to Council to engage a contractor to conduct a review of the issues faced by the shire in relation to recruiting members minimal direct cost implications to the local government in the establishment of a VFS brigade, Although there may be a nominal reduction in ESL funding it should be in line with the reduction on operating costs relevant to a brigade.

OFFICER'S COMMENT

Many volunteer services are experiencing issues in relation to recruiting and retaining active volunteers, it is pertinent to develop an in depth understanding of the issues faced by the Shire of Northam in recruiting and retaining volunteers with the ultimate objective to develop and implement a volunteer recruitment and retention strategy.

BFAC RECOMMENDATION

- 1. That Council engage the Association of Volunteer Bush Fire Brigades to develop a volunteer recruitment strategy, in conjunction with Shire staff, incorporating a community survey.**

Moved D Russell

Seconded B Wilding

Carried

- 2. That Shire outside staff are to be trained in fire fighting (Introduction to Fire Fighting and Bush fire Fighting) and are to be made available during business hours where reasonable.**

Moved G Both

Seconded G Montgomery

Carried

6.5 Development of Volunteer Fire Services Brigade.

Name of Applicant:	Internal Staff Report
File Ref:	5.1.3.1
Officer:	Felix McQuistan
Officer Interest	Nil
Policy:	Nil
Voting:	Simple Majority
Date:	June 2014

PURPOSE

To consider making a recommendation to Council in relation to converting a brigade into a VFS brigade under the direct management of DFES under an MOU.

BACKGROUND

The Shire of Northam has received some interest from brigade members to be managed directly by DFES. There is currently a three year trial underway in the Kimberly and furthermore the emergency services legislation review currently being undertaken by DFES indicates a strong possibility that this will be available as an option to brigades and Local Government in the future.

A recommendation of the 2005 Community Development and Justice Standing Committee (CDJSC), was for the review and amalgamation of Fire and Emergency Services Legislation (*Bush Fires Act 1954, FESA Act 1998 and the Fire Brigades Act 1942*). Further to this, CDJSC also recommended that legislation also be amended to enable DFES (*FESA at the time*) to enter into an agreement with Local Government to manage the Operation and administration of Bush Fire Brigades.

Recommendation 55

The emergency services legislation is to provide for FESA and local government to enter into an agreement for the purpose of local government transferring the following responsibilities to FESA on a permanent basis:

- *Emergency incident control;*
- *Bushfire Brigade operations and administration; and*
- *The determination and administration of the ESL, in relation to the capital and recurring costs associated with the Bushfire Brigades.*

Although the legislation does not currently enable DFES to manage bushfire brigades DFES have taken steps in the past (where all parties concerned agree) to manage brigades by way of an MOU utilising the development of a Volunteer Fire Services Brigade. In cases where this has occurred the Bushfire brigade has been disbanded however the VFS brigade are put in place utilising existing infrastructure and equipment. Generally for this to occur the VFS unit profile is amended to include a role in addition to bushfire such as Offensive structural (Breathing apparatus) or road crash (RCR) capacity to meet the growing needs of the community.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Bush Fires Act 1954

FESA Act 1998

Fire Brigades Act 1942

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

There should be minimal direct cost implications to the local government in the establishment of a VFS brigade, although there may be a nominal reduction in ESL funding it should be in line with the reduction on operating costs relevant to a brigade.

OFFICER'S COMMENT

Although the legislation is not currently in place for Local Governments to hand control of bushfire brigades to DFES, it is clear that there are alternate options for brigades to come under the control of DFES.

Within VFS brigades there is a requirement for considerable increased commitment from the unit members due to the need to provide an enhanced service level (Structural / RCR) training in addition to refresher training and an increased level of minimum training competencies to satisfy DFES requirements.

Although DFES provide a higher level of expectations on the unit members there is generally a positive outcome in regards to service delivery due to the enhanced skills within the brigade. Further to this DFES have shown a willingness to provide an increased level of funding to VFS brigades when compared with LG BFB's due to the enhanced nature of the Unit's role.

Although the Shire of Northam has not received a formal request for DFES to manage a brigade, it would be appropriate for the BFAC to consider development of a VFS as an option.

BFAC RECOMMENDATION

BFAC recommend to Council that where a brigade wish to be under the control of DFES that they be given the opportunity to trial the proposal utilising the development of a VFS brigade or other appropriate model

Moved D Russell Seconded P Antonio

Motion Defeated 4/5

6.6 DFES Legislation Review

Name of Applicant:	Internal Staff Report
File Ref:	5.1.3.1
Officer:	Felix McQuistan
Officer Interest	Nil
Policy:	Nil
Voting:	Simple Majority
Date:	June 2014

PURPOSE

To consider making a recommendation to Council in relation to developing a stance on the concept paper into the Legislation review currently underway by DFES.

BACKGROUND

A recommendation of the 2005 Community Development and Justice Standing Committee (CDJSC), was for the review and amalgamation of Fire and Emergency Services Legislation (*Bush Fires Act 1954*, *FESA Act 1998* and the *Fire Brigades Act 1942*). Further to this, CDJSC also recommended that legislation also be amended to enable DFES (*FESA at the time*) to enter into an agreement with Local Government to manage the Operation and administration of Bush Fire Brigades.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Bush Fires Act 1954

FESA Act 1998

Fire Brigades Act 1942

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

There are numerous and complex cost implications with the proposal to change the legislation including the LGGS budget (ESL) in addition to potential implications in respect to state and local government funding arrangements.

OFFICER'S COMMENT

The full DFES concept paper that has been released and brigades have been provided a copy of the full paper for their information, in addition to this WALGA have released a "Local Government Summary" which is included as an attachment to this agenda. Having reviewed the draft LG position paper it is apparent that the concept paper has been reviewed at considerable length and a clear position has been suggested in relation to many of the topics.

BFAC RECOMMENDATION

BFAC advised that the review was beyond their understanding and they were unable to provide a recommendation to Council.

7. DISCUSSION TOPICS

7.1 ESL Budget Initial Offer Received \$105,000.

7.2 Inkpen BFB land acquisition

There was discussion regarding the progress of the land acquisition for the proposed Inkpen fire shed, the land survey has been completed, awaiting Department for Land to accept the survey and issue a title, once this occurs there is a need for the land to be cleared to make way for the proposed shed.

It was highlighted that the LGGs (ESL) grant scheme specifically prohibits earthworks from expenditure within the ESL budget, accordingly there is a need for alternate funding to be found within the Shire of Northam budget for earthworks.

BFAC RECOMMENDATION

Council allocate funds to cover the cost of earthworks on the identified site for the Inkpen Brigade Shed, as it is not an eligible expense in accordance with the LGGs (ESL) guidelines.

Moved S Kuiper Seconded D Russell

Carried

8. GENERAL BUSINESS

The ownership of the property where the Clackline Light tanker is ordinarily housed has changed, as such the farmer who used to monitor its use and maintain its safety is moving from the area. The brigade has requested that in an effort to increase security of the appliance there will now be a need to lock the fire shed.

Accordingly, the brigade have requested that a persona access (PA) door with combination lock be installed in the fire shed on Smith road.

BFAC RECOMMENDATION

Council allocate Funds for the installation of a PA door with Combination lock for the fire shed on Smith Road to ensure that the appliance can be appropriately secured.

Moved B Wilding Seconded A Smith

Carried

BFAC RECOMMENDATION

The Committee discussed the need for a Fire Control Officer (FCO) meeting prior to the next fire season, and recommended a suitable date.

That an FCO meeting be held prior to the fire season on the 7th October 2014

Moved B Wilding Seconded A Smith

Carried

Three years ago funding was secured through the ESL for the installation of a concrete hard stand to the front of the Bakers Hill fire shed, with the assistance of the brigade and Wooroloo prison the hard stand was installed. Currently there is no suitable crossover to the roadway and the brigade have requested that the area between the fire shed hardstand and the roadway be bituminised and a tree that is centrally located on the verge be removed to improve access and eliminate erosion issues face by the brigade during rainstorms.

BFAC RECOMMENDATION

That Council allocate funds to remove a tree and bituminise a crossover for the Bakers Hill fire shed to enable suitable access to the site

Moved G Both Seconded D Russell

Carried

Discussion was held regarding harvest bans during the restricted burning period and the application of the harvest ban on those days. It was suggested that harvest bans are not to be implemented after Australia day unless the prevailing weather required the bans to be imposed as generally the public holidays after Australia day are during the restricted burning period and the weather has provided a lower fire danger than at the peak of the fire season.

BFAC RECOMMENDATION

That harvest bans after the Australia day long weekend be imposed based upon weather readings

Moved B Wilding Seconded D Russell

Carried

- Discussion was held regarding the enforcement process regarding people burning carelessly, BFAC were advised to contact the Rangers where this has occurred
- A donation of drinking water was supplied by BGC to the brigades (2 pallets of drinking water)
- The Inkpen brigade advised that it had installed a water tank adjacent to the entry to BGC quarry on great southern highway BGC will keep the tank full and signage is needed for the tank
- Brigades were advised that the DFES conference is to be held on 3rd October and the Volunteers association has the capacity to fund some brigade members if they wish to attend.
- There is a need for keys to be issued to FCO's to access the standpipes during emergencies.
- Permit conditions were discussed and the need to consider smoke over the roads was highlighted, Topic to be considered more in depth at the FCO meeting.

9. NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED

Next meeting to be held on Tuesday the 14th October 2014

10. DECLARATION OF CLOSURE

This meeting was closed at 9 pm.

"I certify that the Minutes of the Bushfire Advisory Committee meeting held on 10 June 2014 have been confirmed as a true and correct record."

_____ Presiding Officer

_____ Date