



Shire of Northam
Heritage, Commerce and Lifestyle

Shire of Northam

Minutes

Bush Fire Advisory Committee

21 July 2020

UNCONFIRMED

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1. DECLARATION OF OPENING

The Presiding Member Cr T M Little declared the meeting open at 5.33pm.

2. ATTENDANCE

Voting Committee:

Councillor – Shire of Northam	Terry Little
Councillor – Shire of Northam	Carl Della
Chief Bush Fire Control Officer	Chris Marris
Deputy Bush Fire Control Officer/Wundowie Bush Fire Brigade	Mathew Macqueen
Deputy Bush Fire Control Officer	Simon Peters
Inkpen Bush Fire Brigade	Nic Dewar
Clackline Muresk Bush Fire Brigade	Blair Wilding
Grass Valley Bush Fire Brigade	Sam Moss
Irishtown Bush Fire Brigade	Rob Herzer
Southern Brook Bush Fire Brigade	Paul Antonio
Northam Central Bush Fire Brigade	Murray McGregor
Bakers Hill Bush Fire Brigade	Kristafer Brown

Non Voting:

Community Emergency Service Manager	Brendon Rutter
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Staff:

Executive Manager Development Services	Chadd Hunt
Executive Assistant - CEO	Nadege Vinicombe

Gallery:

Shire of Northam Ranger	Jason Cacic
Inkpen Bush Fire Brigade	Neil Diamond
Bakers Hill Bush Fire Brigade	Andrew Burrows
Clackline Muresk Bush Fire Brigade	Joe Marasco
Clackline Muresk Bush Fire Brigade	Bob Stockman
Clackline Muresk Bush Fire Brigade	Matthew Letch
Clackline Muresk Bush Fire Brigade	Michael Letch
Irishtown Bushfire Brigade	Terry Hasson

2.1 APOLOGIES

Wundowie Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service	Jeffrey Roberts
Northam Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service	Greg Montgomery
Jennapullin Bush Fire Brigade	Aaron Smith

2.2 ABSENT

Nil.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Members should fill in Disclosure of Interest forms for items in which they have a financial, proximity or impartiality interest and forward these to the Presiding Member before the meeting commences.

*As defined in section 5.60A of the Local Government Act 1995, a **financial interest** occurs where a Councillor / Committee Member, or a person with whom the Councillor / Committee Member is closely associated, has a direct or indirect financial interest in the matter. That is, the person stands to make a financial gain or loss from the decision, either now or at some time in the future.*

*As defined in section 5.61 of the Local Government Act 1995, an **indirect financial interest** includes a reference to a financial relationship between that person and another person who requires a Local Government decision in relation to the matter.*

*As defined in section 5.60B of the Local Government Act 1995, a person has a **proximity interest** in a matter if the matter concerns a proposed change to a planning scheme affecting land that adjoins the person's land; or a proposed change to the zoning or use of land that adjoins the person's land; or a proposed development (as defined in section 5.63(5)) of land that adjoins the person's land.*

*As defined in 34C of the Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996, an **impartiality interest** means an interest that could, or could reasonably be perceived to, adversely affect the impartiality of the person having the interest and includes an interest arising from kinship, friendship or membership of an association.*

Item Name	Item No.	Name	Type of Interest	Nature of Interest
Bush Fire Control Officer Nominations	6.3	Paul Antonio	Impartiality	Discloser is being nominated for position of FCO
Bush Fire Control Officer Nominations	6.3	Kristafer Brown	Impartiality	Discloser is being nominated for position of FCO
Bush Fire Control Officer Nominations	6.3	Simon Peters	Impartiality	Discloser is being nominated for position of FCO
Bush Fire Control Officer Nominations	6.3	Chris Marris	Impartiality	Discloser is being nominated for position of FCO
Bush Fire Control Officer Nominations	6.3	Nicholas Dewar	Impartiality	Discloser is being nominated for position of FCO
Bush Fire Control Officer Nominations	6.3	Murray McGregor	Impartiality	Discloser is being nominated for position of FCO
Bush Fire Control Officer Nominations	6.3	Mathew Macqueen	Impartiality	Discloser is being nominated for position of FCO
Appointment of 2020/21 Chief Bush Fire Control Officer (CBFCO) and Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer (DCBFCO)	6.4	Simon Peters	Financial	Honorarium being received by discloser as they are the CBFCO
Appointment of 2020/21 Chief Bush Fire Control Officer (CBFCO) and Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer (DCBFCO)	6.4	Chris Marris	Financial	Honorarium being received by discloser as they are the DCBFCO

4. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

4.1 COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 10 MARCH 2020

<p>RECOMMENDATION/COMMITTEE DECISION</p> <p>Minute No: BFAC.248</p> <p>Moved: Blair Wilding Seconded: Sam Moss, Grass Valley</p> <p>That the minutes of the Bush Fire Advisory meeting held on 10 March 2020 be confirmed as a true and correct record of that meeting.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">CARRIED 12/0</p>

5. RECEIVING OF PRESENTATIONS

Nil.

UNCONFIRMED

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS

6.1 COMMUNITY EMERGENCY SERVICES MANAGER REPORT

Address:	N/A
Owner:	N/A
Applicant:	N/A
File Reference:	5.1.3.1
Reporting Officer:	Chadd Hunt, Executive Manager Development Services
Responsible Officer:	Chadd Hunt, Executive Manager Development Services
Officer Declaration of Interest:	Nil.
Voting Requirement:	Simple Majority
Press release to be issued:	No

BRIEF

For the Committee to receive and note the update provided by the Community Emergency Services Manager.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil.

A. BACKGROUND / DETAILS

N/A.

B. CONSIDERATIONS

B.1 Strategic Community / Corporate Business Plan

Theme Area 3: Safety and Security

Outcome 3.1: Shire of Northam residents are able to pursue the fullest life possible without fear of or hindrance from crime and disorder.

B.2 Financial / Resource Implications

Nil.

B.3 Legislative Compliance

Nil.

B.4 Policy Implications

Nil.

B.5 Stake Holder Engagement / Consultation

Nil.

B.6 Risk Implications

Risk Category	Description	Rating (consequence x likelihood)	Mitigation Action
Financial	N/A	N/A	N/A
Health & Safety	N/A	N/A	N/A
Reputation	N/A	N/A	N/A
Service Interruption	N/A	N/A	N/A
Compliance	N/A	N/A	N/A
Property	N/A	N/A	N/A
Environment	N/A	N/A	N/A

C. OFFICER'S COMMENT

2020 is a year that will not be quickly forgotten, with COVID-19 being a consuming fixture in the lives of all. Staff would like to take this opportunity to thank all brigade members for taking the evolving changes in stride and adapting and overcoming changes as they occurred.

As things in the COVID department begin to wind down in WA staff attention is being redirected to the looming 2020/21 Bushfire season. The focus over the coming months will be core skills training and preparedness for both the brigades and the local communities, with a series of physical and online awareness campaigns about property protection for the coming season.

More information on this will follow in the coming weeks.

Recruitment

Staff will be running a recruitment workshop on Saturday 18th July 2020 at the Northam Recreation Centre.

This workshop has been arranged as an action of the last Captains' meeting as COVID continued to be a declining factor, and staff were able to redirect attention onto the development of the brigades. Jen Pidgeon and Kate White from the DFES Volunteer and Youth Services area, in conjunction with Tracy McBride, the Volunteer Management Support Officer for the GM Region, have put together a package that will be workshopped initially by

the brigade leadership groups, with strategies being developed at brigade level for their local community.

Once the workshop is complete the brigades will have a further opportunity for a brigade level session on station to further refine the strategies as the brigade promotes the recruitment strategies. Staff will assess each brigade's suggestions, gather data regarding the effectiveness of each strategy and assess where further refinement is required. Further information on this will be provided at a later stage.

Leadership Forum

The Shire of Northam is partnering up with DFES this year and the pre-season forum will have a focus on leadership within the brigades. The seasonal synopsis will be provided, and presentations concerning several DFES programs that all volunteers are eligible for, but there will be a strong focus on developing brigade leaders for the future success of the brigades.

PPC

All PPC has now been ordered – staff would like to thank the brigades that have placed their orders in early. For those who have not yet placed an order, please place orders as soon as possible to avoid delays in delivery of PPC, especially for those brigades whose PPC is outdated or no longer fit for purpose.

Fleet Servicing

Planning for the annual servicing of the fleet is well under way and much earlier this year as staff have refined last year's process. Staff are expecting all appliances and operational systems including hose testing to be completed by mid-September.

Pre-Season training

Staff focus for the coming months will be on core skills, and staff are planning visits with each brigade to run through any core skills drills that will assist brigade members in optimal preparation prior to the beginning of the season. Staff will liaise with Training Officers and Captains in due course to arrange dates and times that are suitable for the brigade.

WAERN Network

There have been ongoing investigations with the Regional Staff, DFES and the ACMA regarding the continued access to the WAERN network by either unauthorised radios and or unauthorised people. This has led to numerous issues past season with illegal radios that clearly had a fault from causing communications issues at active incidents.

A decision has been reached within the region that VHF Mid-Band channel 43 will be disconnected as a priority. As the only way to ensure that the network integrity can be maintained, new and updated communication plans will be supplied into each appliance and station as soon as published and will also form part of the pre-season training.

Emergency Service Cadets Unit

It is with immense pleasure that staff advise the Emergency Service Cadet unit will be launched to coincide with the start of Term 4 as a pilot project to complete the 2020 year.

This has required a lot of work and staff are pleased to say this will deliver a project critical to ensuring the future of volunteers within the emergency service department. Further details will be provided regarding how brigades are able to capitalise on this programme at a date closer to the launch of the program.

Online Ordering

In the past few months staff have been working with PPC supply chains to improve the PPC and Equipment ordering processes. Staff are pleased to report that within the coming months online access with the main suppliers will be available - equipment officers will be able to place orders directly through the suppliers' websites, which will then come through to staff for approval and payment.

It is hoped that this new streamlined process will empower the EQ officers with the tools to better manage daily requirements at brigade level. Once the arrangements are complete staff will organise face-to-face training with all EQ officers and Captains to discuss how the ordering system functions.

This is an exciting project that will deliver enormous efficiencies at brigade levels.

Blessing of the Fleet

In early October staff will be arranging a blessing of the fleet, and also a smoking ceremony by representatives of country as the new season begins. Further details will be provided in due course.

Staff would like to again take the opportunity to thank personally all brigade members for the incredible work this year, with all the evolving changes and restrictions happening that had the potential to create a significant impact at brigade level. It is a credit to the brigade teams how well all personnel adapted to the changing environment and continued to make changes as necessary to achieve compliance with State Government Directives, in order to keep our members and our communities safe.

RECOMMENDATION/COMMITTEE DECISION

Minute No: BFAC.249

Moved: Matthew Macqueen

Seconded: Murray McGregor

That Council note the Community Emergency Services Manager Report as provided.

CARRIED 12/0

6.2 CHIEF BUSH FIRE CONTROL OFFICER (CBFCO) REPORT

Address:	N/A
Owner:	N/A
Applicant:	N/A
File Reference:	5.1.3.1
Reporting Officer:	Chadd Hunt, Executive Manager Development Services
Responsible Officer:	Chadd Hunt, Executive Manager Development Services
Officer Declaration of Interest:	Nil.
Voting Requirement:	Simple Majority
Press release to be issued:	No

BRIEF

For the Committee to receive and note the update provided by the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil.

A. BACKGROUND / DETAILS

N/A.

B. CONSIDERATIONS

B.1 Strategic Community / Corporate Business Plan

Theme Area 3: Safety and Security

Outcome 3.1: Shire of Northam residents are able to pursue the fullest life possible without fear of or hindrance from crime and disorder.

B.2 Financial / Resource Implications

Nil.

B.3 Legislative Compliance

Nil.

B.4 Policy Implications

Nil.

B.5 Stake Holder Engagement / Consultation

Nil.

B.6 Risk Implications

Risk Category	Description	Rating (consequence x likelihood)	Mitigation Action
Financial	N/A	N/A	N/A
Health & Safety	N/A	N/A	N/A
Reputation	N/A	N/A	N/A
Service Interruption	N/A	N/A	N/A
Compliance	N/A	N/A	N/A
Property	N/A	N/A	N/A
Environment	N/A	N/A	N/A

C. OFFICER'S COMMENT

I would firstly like to take the opportunity to thank Captains, their members and BFCOs with special mention of my two deputies for their work and support over both the 19/20 fire season and during the COVID-19 challenges which have impacted upon us in recent months.

We were fortunate to have no major incidents again in the most recent fire season despite having an unprecedented number of poor weather days and resulting total fire bans. Of course, there were still many incidents however due to the quick professional response by Brigades, and at times a bit of luck, we prevented them from escalation. The total fire ban during the unrestricted period in May resulted in an unacceptable number of call-outs for our volunteers and work needs to be done to improve communication with and understanding of residents to avoid this in the future.

The news within the CESM's report on the cessation of the mid-ban channel 43 link to channel 329 is of great concern to me and I am sure many within the bush fire service in Northam. I have no doubt that such a decision will cost us members and ultimately likely result in an **increased risk to property and life within the Shire of Northam** through reduced communication. Given the recency of the decision (within the last week), the lack of consultation over this decision, and the potentially significant consequences of this decision, I hope that there will be the opportunity for meaningful discussion and decisions to occur during this BFAC meeting on this issue. My experience is that increased communication, not reduced communication, is vital during an incident. Furthermore, I feel that such a decision undervalues the vital importance of farmer/private response vehicles (many of whom are official members of

Brigades) in responding to and controlling incidents. All fires start small, but decisions that delay communication, push away private response, and alienate members, will ensure that incidents escalate unnecessarily.

As you can see, we have had some success with the recruitment and training of BFCO's. Last season, including chief and deputies, we had eight active BFCO (excluding CESM/Shire). Subject to their endorsement, this coming season we are on track to have at least 12 active and qualified BFCO's with the possibility of a couple more. I thank those incoming (and returning) BFCO's for the commitment they have made to push through the training requirements; I understand it can be burdensome to try to do in just one year. The other thing you will see is that we are on track to have five (up from one) BFCO's who are qualified for the Deputy and Chief positions. While this may or may not be the desire of these individuals, it is great to have this depth of experience and option as we move forward. As we see a return to a more sustainable number of BFCO's we will then need to collectively work with our memberships to identify future potential BFCO's so we can slowly build their experience, interest and training to step into these roles in the future.

Having met with BFCO's in early July, it has been decided that we will run a Ground Controller course just before the 2020/21 fire season for BFCO's and brigade leadership teams. This, of course, will be optional but is a shift towards doing more as a team and to develop this team proactively (rather than a stick approach of saying you must do this). We will again be holding a scenario evening and bus tour of a few key sites (i.e. UXO) within the Shire for the leadership team as the season approaches.

Hopefully it was evident last season that as Chief I tried not to attend most incidents and instead left it in the capable hands of our Brigades/BFCO's. Those which I did attend, in most instances, was only in a support capacity rather than as the IC. Should I be reappointed for 20/21, I will again try to find this balance of allowing space for our Brigades and BFCO's to take a more active incident control roles. I think this is important in building the capacity of the team, giving greater purpose back to the BFCO's and also reducing the burden on the Chief and Deputy roles.

At a Shire level, I see some good progress in some areas but continue to be frustrated in others. To try to get something progressed that is not on their agenda can be difficult at times. On the positive, as noted in the CESM report, we have seen progress on uniforms. Following numerous issues of Brigades and new members waiting extended periods for new uniforms last season, we have been proactive in getting orders in ahead of the new financial year rush on the suppliers. Combined with other refinements Brendon has made should see improvements in this regard.

Working with the Shire, we were also able to get three weather stations purchased before the end of the financial year, along with four Kestrel

handheld weather readers. The weather stations, once installed (earmarked for Wundowie, Irishtown, Grass Valley, plus one as part of the new build at Bakers Hill), will provide the Weather Officers and Chief (along with all members/public) with improved visibility of weather conditions across the Shire when making decisions around Harvest bans and the like. Importantly, these must not be seen as a replacement of what our Weather Officers do, but instead a support tool to their vital expertise and interpretation. A policy around this will need to be progressed. The handheld Kestrels were in response to the expectation that weather officers have had to purchase their own weather readers and, given the various age, brand and style of weather readers used, there were variations in readings between devices.

The co-location of Northam Central BFB with the SES is a good outcome, providing Northam Central with facilities better suited for operations as well as for attracting and retaining members. Well done to Murray for his relentless efforts in bringing about this result, and others who assisted. I also look forward to the opportunities that will no doubt result from working more closely with other emergency services, such as the SES, within the Shire.

The need to progress a more permanent and suitable home for Wundowie BFB remains on the agenda. The imminent start to the new Bakers Hill Fire Station will be welcome news I am sure to the Brigade, especially with the arrival of their new 3.4U appliance last week which tests the limits of the current stations' physical capacity.

The incident in May behind Spring Hill presented several learning opportunities for both our service and DFES in terms of UXO's. I will be working with our BFCO's, the Shire and DFES to try to improve and refine a number of processes and policies. Updated mapping, UXO notifications, site-specific response plans, and other items, are all areas for consideration.

With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions in WA, recruitment is a key focus for a number of our brigades as we lead up to the current season. The workshop just last weekend provided and/or prompted some useful ideas, and I am keen to work with applicable brigades to assist with their recruitment journey. As part of this, over the past month or two, I have been working with the Shire to ascertain the ability for us to communicate with new ratepayers within the Shire. I hope that we can use this as a tool to introduce Brigades with new members of the community, share important property preparation material, as well as further develop our Harvest Ban SMS list. The suggestion out of the recruitment forum to develop a pack for real estate agents to give new tenants is another idea worth exploring among others.

Thanks again for your support.

Regards - Chris Marris, CBFCO

RECOMMENDATION/COMMITTEE DECISION

Minute No: BFAC.250

Moved: Kristofer Brown

Seconded: Sam Moss

That Council note the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer Report as provided.

CARRIED 12/0

Paul Antonio has declared an impartiality interest in 6.3 – BUSH FIRE CONTROL OFFICER NOMINATIONS as he is being nominated as a Bush Fire Control Officer.

Kristofer Brown has declared an impartiality interest in 6.3 – BUSH FIRE CONTROL OFFICER NOMINATIONS as he is being nominated as a Bush Fire Control Officer.

Simon Peters has declared an impartiality interest in 6.3 – BUSH FIRE CONTROL OFFICER NOMINATIONS as he is being nominated as a Bush Fire Control Officer.

Chris Marris has declared an impartiality interest in 6.3 – BUSH FIRE CONTROL OFFICER NOMINATIONS as he is being nominated as a Bush Fire Control Officer.

Nicholas Dewar has declared an impartiality interest in 6.3 – BUSH FIRE CONTROL OFFICER NOMINATIONS as he is being nominated as a Bush Fire Control Officer.

Murray McGregor has declared an impartiality interest in 6.3 – BUSH FIRE CONTROL OFFICER NOMINATIONS as he is being nominated as a Bush Fire Control Officer.

Mathew Macqueen has declared an impartiality interest in 6.3 – BUSH FIRE CONTROL OFFICER NOMINATIONS as he is being nominated as a Bush Fire Control Officer.

6.3 BUSH FIRE CONTROL OFFICER NOMINATIONS

Address:	N/A
Owner:	N/A
Applicant:	N/A
File Reference:	5.1.3.1
Reporting Officer:	Chadd Hunt Executive Manager Development Services
Responsible Officer:	Chadd Hunt Executive Manager Development Services
Officer Declaration of Interest:	Nil
Voting Requirement:	Simple Majority
Press release to be issued:	No

BRIEF

For the committee to recommend to Council the appointment of Bush Fire Control Officers (BFCO) for the 2020/21 bush fire season.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: BFCO Summary sheet (supplied as a separate confidential attachment)

A. BACKGROUND / DETAILS

Council resolved at its meeting held on 15 July 2015 the following (in part)–

5. *Endorse that the minimum standard to be appointed a BFCO include the recommendation to complete the following DFES training modules prior to 1st November 2015 and become a requirement in order to qualify to the position of Bushfire Control Officer for the 2016 and future fire seasons.*
 - *Introduction to Fire Fighting*
 - *Bush Fire Fire fighting*
 - *Structural Firefighting*
 - *Crew Leader/Advanced Firefighter and/or Sector Commander*
 - *FCO course or a refresher within the last 5 years*

At the BFAC meeting held on 10th March 2020 it was recommended that those nominated for the position of BFCO be approved to progress to the next stage of formal application and assessment for a recommendation at the June BFAC meeting.

Given the COVID19 issues the process of formal application and assessment as prescribed by the Bush Fire Manual was not undertaken. In discussion with Brigade Captains it was recommended that the nomination be referred to BFAC for endorsement.

B. CONSIDERATIONS

Strategic Community / Corporate Business Plan

Theme Area 3: Safety and Security

Outcome 3.1: Shire of Northam residents are able to pursue the fullest life possible without fear of or hindrance from crime and disorder.

Financial / Resource Implications

Advertising costs.

Legislative Compliance

Section 38 (1) Bush Fire Act 1954 which states as follows:

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.

Policy Implications

Nil.

Stakeholder Engagement / Consultation

Chief Bush Fire Control Officer

Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer

Captains of all Brigade

Volunteer Bush Fire Fighters whom nominated in accordance with the process outlined in the Shire of Northam Bush Fire Manual.

Risk Implications

- Reputational –High
 - Ensuring that any person/s appointed as Bush Fire Control Officers have the capacity to manage emergency incidents within the Shire of Northam
- Financial - Low
 - Officers believe the financial implications are low due to advertising costs being accounted for in annual budget process
- Compliance - Low
 - Officers believe that by following processes as defined in the Shire of Northam Bush Fires Manual in accordance with powers under the Bush Fires Act 1954, any compliance issues will be resolved.
- Legal – High
 - Officers believe that Council is obliged to ensure that any person/s appointed under 38(1) of the Bush Fires Act 1954 are suitably qualified to hold the position. In the interest of community safety Council has a duty of care to ensure that any person/s appointed as Bush Fire Control Officers have the right knowledge, experience & skillset and are capable of demonstrating a working understanding of the special powers of a Bush Fire Control Officer under Section 39 of the Bush Fires Act 1954 and their obligations to Council

C. OFFICER'S COMMENT

Candidates that have nominated and subsequently applied for the position of Bush Fire Control Officer that meet the criteria as outlined in the Bush Fires Manual and determined as eligible to be appointed are listed below. Please refer to the BFCO summary sheet for training completed – this has been provided as a separate confidential attachment.

As indicated above the process has been modified due to the impact of COVID19 and subsequently those that have nominated have not been through the same assessment process as last season.

Where a nominee has not achieved the minimum training requirements as prescribed by Council, it is recommended by staff that they should be appointed only after further training has been achieved.

Until required training is completed the member is ineligible to be designated as a fully operational BFCO.

Officers will prepare a development plan and work with all prospective candidates to ensure training requirements are able to be achieved as soon as practical. Once the extra training is achieved and the personnel then meet the requirements of Council formal appointment can be granted by way of Certificate of Appointment, and further advertising as per standard advertising protocols.

ORIGINAL RECOMMENDATION/COMMITTEE DECISION

Moved: Simon Peters

Seconded: Kristafer Brown

That Council appoints the following Fire Control Officers for the 2020/21 Season in accordance with the criteria set in section 5 of the Shire of Northam Bush Fire Manual:

Inkpen BFB

- **Nicholas Dewar**
- **Neil Diamond (approved for appointment subject to meeting minimum training requirements prior to the start of the 2020/21 season)**

Wundowie BFB

- **Mathew Macqueen**

Bakers Hill BFB

- **Simon Peters**
- **Kristafer Brown**

Clackline / Muresk BFB

- **Matthew Letch**

Northam Central

- **Luke Hagen (approved for appointment subject to meeting minimum training requirements prior to the start of the 2020/21 season)**

Irishtown BFB

- Robert Herzer
- Murray McGregor

Jennapullin BFB

Grass Valley BFB

- Christopher Marris
- Paul Reynolds (approved for appointment subject to meeting minimum training requirements prior to the start of the 2020/21 season)
- Philip Lloyd (approved for appointment subject to meeting minimum training requirements prior to the start of the 2020/21 season)

Southern Brook BFB

- Paul Antonio (approved for appointment subject to meeting minimum training requirements prior to the start of the 2020/21 season)

Wundowie VFRS

Northam VFRS

- Greg Montgomery

Shire of Northam

- Brendon Rutter – CESM
- Kellee Walters – Ranger (Administrative Only)
- Jason Cacic – Ranger (Administrative Only)

AMENDMENT

Moved: Sam Moss

Seconded: Robert Herzer

That the Committee ensure Aaron Smith is included in the Jennapullin Nomination for Bush Fire Control Officer, (approved subject to meeting minimum training requirements prior to the start of the 2020/21 season).

CARRIED 12/0

SUBSTANTIVE RECOMMENDATION/COMMITTEE DECISION

Minute No: BFAC.251

That Council appoints the following Fire Control Officers for the 2020/21 Season in accordance with the criteria set in section 5 of the Shire of Northam Bush Fire Manual:

Inkpen BFB

- Nicholas Dewar
- Neil Diamond (approved for appointment subject to meeting minimum training requirements prior to the start of the 2020/21 season)

Wundowie BFB

- Mathew Macqueen

Bakers Hill BFB

- Simon Peters
- Kristofer Brown

Clackline / Muresk BFB

- Matthew Letch

Northam Central

- Luke Hagen (approved for appointment subject to meeting minimum training requirements prior to the start of the 2020/21 season)

Irishtown BFB

- Robert Herzer
- Murray McGregor

Jennapullin BFB

- Aaron Smith (approved for appointment subject to meeting minimum training requirements prior to the start of the 2020/21 season)

Grass Valley BFB

- Christopher Marris
- Paul Reynolds (approved for appointment subject to meeting minimum training requirements prior to the start of the 2020/21 season)
- Philip Lloyd (approved for appointment subject to meeting minimum training requirements prior to the start of the 2020/21 season)

Southern Brook BFB

- Paul Antonio (approved for appointment subject to meeting minimum training requirements prior to the start of the 2020/21 season)

Wundowie VFRS

Northam VFRS

- Greg Montgomery

Shire of Northam

- Brendon Rutter – CESM
- Kellee Walters – Ranger (Administrative Only)
- Jason Cacic – Ranger (Administrative Only)

CARRIED 12/0

Simon Peters has declared an impartiality interest in 6.4 – APPOINTMENT OF 2020/21 CHIEF BUSH FIRE CONTROL OFFICER (CBFCO) AND DEPUTY CHIEF BUSH FIRE CONTROL OFFICER (DCBFCO) as he receives an honorarium for the position of current Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer.

Chris Marris has declared an impartiality interest in 6.4 – APPOINTMENT OF 2020/21 CHIEF BUSH FIRE CONTROL OFFICER (CBFCO) AND DEPUTY CHIEF BUSH FIRE CONTROL OFFICER (DCBFCO) as he receives an honorarium for the position of current Chief Bush Fire Control Officer.

6.4 APPOINTMENT OF 2020/21 CHIEF BUSH FIRE CONTROL OFFICER (CBFCO) AND DEPUTY CHIEF BUSH FIRE CONTROL OFFICER (DCBFCO)

Address:	N/A
Owner:	N/A
File Reference:	5.1.3.1
Reporting Officer:	Chadd Hunt Executive Manager Development Services
Responsible Officer:	Chadd Hunt Executive Manager Development Services
Voting Requirement	Simple Majority

BRIEF

Upon appointment of the Fire Control Officers for the 2020/21 year, Council is required to appoint a Chief Bush Fire Control Officer (CBFCO) and Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer (DCBFCO).

ATTACHMENTS

Nil.

A. BACKGROUND / DETAILS

At the BAFC meeting in September 2019, it was resolved to advertise for the position of CBFCO as no other nominations were received from the Brigades. It was also resolved and endorsed by Council to appoint Mathew McQueen and Simon Peters as Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer (DCBFCO's) and Chris Marris as a Senior Bush Fire Control Officer.

Subsequent to that resolution, two nominations were received for the position and at the BFAC meeting held in November 2019 it was recommended to, and endorsed by Council, to appoint Mr Chris Marris as CBFCO for the 2019/20 Bush fire season.

This report is recommending that the appointment for the CBFCO and DCBFCO be “rolled over” for the 2020-21 season.

B. CONSIDERATIONS

Strategic Community / Corporate Business Plan

Theme Area 3: Safety and Security

Outcome 3.1: Shire of Northam residents are able to pursue the fullest life possible without fear of or hindrance from crime and disorder.

Financial / Resource Implications

Advertising costs.

Legislative Compliance

Section 38 (1) Bush Fire Act 1954 which states as follows

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.

Policy Implications

Section 5.1B of the Bush Fire Manual states the following –

5.1B Criteria of a Chief Bush Fire Control Officer

- *Knowledge of managing a volunteer organisation.*
- *Knowledge of all Fire Response Plans in the Shire*
- *Working Knowledge of the Local Emergency Management Arrangements*
- *Knowledge of the Bush Fires Act 1954 and Bush Fires Regulations 1954*
- *Knowledge of the State Emergency Management Policy No 4.8 (Traffic Management During Emergencies)*
- *Ability to attend further fire and emergency management training.*
- *Effective Interpersonal Skills.*
- *Good Written and Verbal Communication Skills.*
- *Leadership Skills.*
- *Management Skills.*
- *Experience in managing operations.*
- *Ability to perform under stressful conditions.*
- *Current appointment as Fire Control Officer.*

- Experienced in firefighting operations within the Shire.
- Currently holds all of the preferred qualifications of the Fire Control Officer.
- Be a member of the DOAC, BFAC and LEMC

Section 5.1C of the Bush Fires manual states the following:

5.1C Qualifications of Chief Bush Fire Control Officer

“Completion of the DFES training core modules and a minimum of 3 years as a BFCO and 5 years firefighting experience in the last 3 years preferably as an executive officer within a brigade of the Shire of Northam.

Persons currently holding the CBFCO's position will have until 2025~~2020~~ to comply with the below training requirements. Any persons newly appointed must hold the below training certifications prior to 31s October each year”.

Completion of required courses are:

- AllMS Awareness
- Introduction to Fire Fighting
- Bush Fire Fighting
- Machine Supervision
- Structural Fire Fighting
- Advanced Bush Fire Fighting
- Crew Leader
- Ground Controller
- Sector Commander
- AllMS 4 or 2017
- Incident Controller Level 1
- Fire Control Officer (in the Last 5 Years)

5.1B Criteria of a Chief Bush Fire Control Officer

- Knowledge of managing a volunteer organisation.
- Knowledge of all Fire Response Plans in the Shire
- Working Knowledge of the Local Emergency Management Arrangements
- Knowledge of the Bush Fires Act 1954 and Bush Fires Regulations 1954
- Knowledge of the State Emergency Management Policy No 4.8 (Traffic Management During Emergencies)
- Ability to attend further fire and emergency management training.
- Effective Interpersonal Skills.
- Good Written and Verbal Communication Skills.
- Leadership Skills.

- *Management Skills.*
- *Experience in managing operations.*
- *Ability to perform under stressful conditions.*
- *Current appointment as Fire Control Officer.*
- *Experienced in firefighting operations within the Shire.*
- *Currently holds all of the preferred qualifications of the Fire Control Officer.*
- *Be a member of the DOAC, BFAC and LEMC*

Stakeholder Engagement / Consultation

Discussion has been held with the existing CBFCO, DCFCOs and brigade captains regarding the process for the forthcoming fire season.

Risk Implications

Council is requested to appoint a CBFCO and DCBFCO who meet the minimum training requirements as per section 5 of the Shire of Northam Bush Fire manual.

C. OFFICER'S COMMENT

As the Committee would be aware the process for the appointment of the CBFCO for the previous season was complicated. In discussion with the current CBFCO and DCBFCOs and with several brigade captains it has been recommended that the current positions be reappointed for the coming 2020-21 season.

It is also recognised that the usual process for nominations and appointments was not possible/feasible due to the issues surrounding COVID-19. In a "normal" year nominations would be called for the position of CBFCO and DCBFCOs prior to the individual Brigade AGMs. The Brigades would then vote on the nominations at their AGM and then present that vote accordingly at the BFAC meeting in June. Given that there were various issues surrounding holding AGMs and meetings generally, it was recommended that for this season the normal process not be followed.

It is recommended that the process prescribed by the Bush Fire Manual be followed for the 2021-21 season.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council formally appoint the following qualified Bush Fire Control Officers to the position of Chief and Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officers for the 2020-21 fires season:

- 1. Chief Bush Fire Control Officer – Chris Marris**
- 2. Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officers – Simon Peters and Mathew Macqueen**

COMMITTEE DECISION

Minute No: BFAC.252

**Moved: Matthew Macqueen
Seconded: Murray McGregor**

That it be recommended to Council that the Chief and Deputy positions be discussed and be sent back to the brigades for nominations following normal processes and that brigades are to have all meetings completed by 23 August 2020, two weeks prior to the next BFAC meeting on 8 September 2020.

CARRIED 12/0

REASON FOR CHANGE TO OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION

The officer's recommendation to roll over the CBFCO and DCBFCO positions from the 2019/20 Bush Fire season was formed because at the time of the recommendation there were meeting restrictions in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As these restrictions are no longer in place, normal nomination and selection procedures may proceed, and other brigade members who wish to take on the roles on CBFCO and/or DCBFCO should be given the opportunity for nomination and appointment.

NOTE

Whilst several members had declared a financial interest in the item relating to an honorarium being paid to the CBFCO and DCBFCO positions they remained in the meeting due to an alternate recommendation being made. As the alternate recommendation did not include any appointment they remained in the meeting and voted on the recommendation.

Please also note the amendment to the Policy implications above with respect to the training requirements of the CBFCO and DCBFCO positions – these have been highlighted in yellow.

7. MOTIONS OF WHICH PREVIOUS NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN

Nil.

8. URGENT BUSINESS APPROVED BY DECISION

Nil.

9. GENERAL BUSINESS

COMMITTEE DECISION

Minute No: BFAC.253

Moved: Matthew Macqueen

Seconded: Rob Herzer

That the Committee recommend Council :

- 1. Requests that decommissioning of channel 43 be immediately ceased until appropriate consultation occurs**
- 2. Prepares questions to present before a DFES representative who was involved in the decision-making processes behind the cessation of the mid-band channel 43 link to channel 329.**
- 3. Requests that DFES provides advice and support addressing the gap created by the cessation of the mid-band channel 43 link to channel 329**
- 4. Requests that a copy of the risk assessment for the cessation of the mid-band channel 43 link to channel 329 be provided by DFES**
- 5. Engages with appropriate local and state politicians with regard to the issue of the cessation of the mid-band channel 43 link to channel 329**

CARRIED 12/0

CESM REPORT ON THE CESSATION OF THE MID-BAND CHANNEL 43 LINK TO CHANNEL 329

There was discussion surrounding the issue. Several brigade members discussed the gap in communications that this channel cessation would cause. Several brigade members discussed the lack of consultation between DFES and the brigades concerning the decommissioning of the mid-band channel link. The Community Emergency Service Manager advised that this decision was made at State level through Operations Communications, and has been an issue at that level for several years. It was suggested that the licence could be purchased from the State and the frequency altered so that this infrastructure could still be utilised in the Shire. The Community Emergency Service Manager advised that the frequency could not be utilised as the State would be redeploying it elsewhere, and that although there was the opportunity for the Shire of Northam to purchase its own mid-band frequency, this would be on

an independent network and may be an expensive and nonviable option, as most radios are switching over to VHF high-band. There was discussion surrounding the risk assessment performed by the DFES, and whether the communication gap created by the cessation of the link had been considered in the risk assessment. The Community Emergency Service Manager advised that he was not sure if it had been included as the risk assessment occurred at State level and he was not present. Several brigade members discussed whether the brigades could request that DFES provide a mitigation strategy for the communication gap. It was also discussed whether the brigades could find out how other local governments have approached this issue.

The questions that will be posed to the DFES representative are as follows –

- Why was the Shire of Northam and the volunteer Bush Fire Brigades not consulted prior to the decision being made?
- What was involved in the risk assessment – did the assessment include the increased risk associated with removing numerous radios used for operational firefighting purposes?
- What contingency plans have been put in place when channel 43 has been removed?
- Were any alternate actions, such as a replacement channel or individual licence agreement with users included as part of the review?
- Has there been any recent examples in other localities where similar action has been undertaken and what was the result of that on the volunteer bushfire organisation?
- Was the option of “handing over” the channel and associated infrastructure back to the Shire of Northam or the local community investigated and is that feasible?
- Was addressing the core issues (being illegal operation and non-registering of radios) considered as part of the review?

SIGNAGE

There was discussion surrounding the minutes from the BFAC meeting held 10 September 2019, concerning fire danger rating signage. The Community Emergency Service Manager advised that signage was currently being harmonised across the country and outcomes would be advised based on the Royal Commission that is currently occurring in the eastern states. The Executive Manager Development Services advised that the weather stations would be

ordered shortly as the new budget has been adopted by Council. The Fire Danger rating signs also has a budget provision however the installation will be dependent on the outcome of the review mentioned above. It was recommended by brigade members that actions from previous BFAC Meeting (such as the signage above) should in future be reported on in officer reports, to ensure that the recommended actions are not forgotten. The Executive Manager Development Services advised that the status report on outstanding BFAC recommendations would form part of the CEM report as done previously.

LETTER TO RURAL FIRE SERVICE

There was discussion surrounding the minutes from the BFAC meeting held 10 September 2019, concerning a letter that was to be sent to the Rural Fire Service. The Community Emergency Service Manager advised that he had not heard back concerning this letter and would provide a report at the next BFAC meeting.

SHIRE RESERVES MANAGEMENT PLAN

There was discussion surrounding whether the Shire Reserves program would be proceeding. The Executive Manager Development Services advised that as the new budget has been approved by Council, this would now be going ahead in conjunction with the MAF funding, and further information would be provided shortly.

UXO SAFETY ISSUES

There was discussion surrounding the status of the report concerning the UXO fire safety issues. The Community Emergency Service Manager advised that he had not heard anything related to the report, but he would provide the report and recommendations at the next BFAC meeting.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 8 September 2020.

11. DECLARATION OF CLOSURE

There being no further business, the Presiding Member Cr T M Little declared the meeting closed at 7.05pm.

"I certify that the Minutes of the Bush Fire Advisory Committee Meeting held on Tuesday, 21 July 2020 have been confirmed as a true and correct record."

_____ Presiding Member

_____ Date