



Shire of Merredin Bush Fire Advisory Committee Pre-Season Meeting Minutes

Thursday, 17 October 2024 at 4.00 pm
Council Chambers, Shire of Merredin Administration Building, Merredin

1.0 Attendance and Apologies

Delegates

Name	Organisation	Position
Michael Caughey	Nukarni/Nokanning Brigade	Chief Bushfire Control Officer Chair
Glenn Crees	Collgar Brigade	Deputy Chief Bushfire Control Officer
Nigel Edgecombe	Burracoppin South Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer
David Last	Collgar Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer
Kael Crees	Collgar Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Cam Gethin	Hines Hill Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer
Luke Growden	Hines Hill Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Chris Hooper	Korbelka Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Paul Wanless	Muntadgin Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer
Neil Smith	Nukarni-Nokanning Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer

Officers

Name	Organisation	Position
Craig Watts	Shire of Merredin	Chief Executive Officer
Amer Tawfik	Shire of Merredin	Executive Manager Engineering Services
Sheree Lowe	Shire of Merredin	Emergency Services Officer

Apologies

Name	Organisation	Position
Matt Barnett	Burracoppin South Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Sam Hooper	Korbelka Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer
Colin Miller	Hines Hill Brigade	Fire Control Officer
John Flockart	Korbelka Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Darren Major	Muntadgin Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Phil Gray	Nukarni-Nokanning Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Cr Phil Van Der Merwe	Shire of Merredin	Council Delegate
Codi Brindley- Mullen	Shire of Merredin	Executive Manager Strategy and Community

2.0 Official Opening

The Chair acknowledged the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today, the Njaki Njaki people of the Nyoongar Nation and paid his respects to Elders past, present and emerging. The Chair then welcomed those in attendance and declared the meeting open at 4.11pm.

2.1 Introductions

The Chair introduced CEO Craig Watts to attendees, and invited all brigade representatives present to introduce themselves.

3.0 Confirmation of Minutes

Confirmation of Minutes of meeting held on 11 October 2023

Motion: That the minutes of the Bushfire Advisory Committee Pre-season meeting held on 11 October 2023 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

Moved: C Gethin

Seconded: G Crees

4.0 Business arising

Nil

5.0 General Business

5.1 New Shire Policy: Use of DFES appliances

During the recent annual vehicle servicing of appliances, it came to light that the Shire has never explicitly made their expectations clear regarding the care and use of DFES fire appliances. Council have therefore passed a new policy regarding the use and care of Shire/DFES appliances.

A copy of the policy was circulated with the agenda ahead of this meeting.

The ESO took questions on the policy to clarify any issues about what was and wasn't permitted in practice.

ESO to review wording on the clause about removing vehicles from the Shire.

5.2 Update from DOAC

- Still debating the 37-40 range to put on a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban (HVMB), but the general preference is still 40, and the advice is still that you don't have to wait until the Fire Behaviour Index hits 40 if it's set to be a bad day.

CBFCO doesn't support harvesting up to the HVMB limit and would prefer to call it earlier if it's going to be a bad day.

CH believes it shouldn't be called before 40 unless it's a really bad day.

- The Merredin repeater is now on Radio Over Internet Protocol (ROIP). This means that radio transmissions made on WAERN 259 can be heard at the Northam office. Northam DFES are asking volunteers not to stop using 259 just because they can listen in, and to continue using it normally - but it also means that if firefighters need assistance during the working day they can be contacted on 259, and if they hear that an incident sounds like it's escalating Mick, Glenn or Sheree might get a phone call from them to check in rather than waiting for the IC to ring the RDC.
- They are working towards getting Merredin Airport as a forward base for air support during high season. It will not be in place for this fire season, but hoping for next fire season.
- The AFDRS issues we experienced have been experienced and reported all around the state, and it's being discussed at state level.
- If there are any townsite blocks in need of hazard mitigation and are classified UCL, inform DFES Northam office because they have some budget available for hazard mitigation.

5.3 Availability of air support

On high threat days, air support is now being based out of Cunderdin.

The advice is, as soon as you think you're going to struggle to get on top of a fire, request air support. Make the request sooner rather than later – you can also cancel the request.

The request for air support is made through the RDC (1800 966 077)

Glenn, Sheree, Cam, David and Kael completed the Ground Controller training in Merredin last month. If you need to call air support, try and make sure you can also get one of those people there.

The three officers from the Merredin VFRS (Phil, Sheree and Sean) also all completed the training, so if you need Ground Control support it's also an option to request VFRS attendance just to assist with that.

5.4 Shire contact for water tank/machinery for firefighting purposes

A reminder that the Shire has a dedicated emergency 24/7 number if you require Shire assistance or equipment at a fire – 6140 1234.

5.5 New equipment

New gear has been ordered for the brigades, but hasn't arrived in time to be distributed for today's meeting. The new gear includes:

- 2 new respirators per brigade
- New safety signage for working near a road

- New adapters – BIC to Camlock
- Thermal Imaging Cameras for Muntadgin and Korbelka

Once it all arrives, the ESO will arrange pick up by, or delivery to, brigades.

Any brigades that do not have orange safety cones in their appliances in the event they're working on or near a road, please let the ESO know to organise purchase.

5.6 LGIS induction

The Shire's Local Government Insurance Scheme (LGIS) (who insure the bushfire volunteers, appliances and private vehicles) representative has requested that all volunteers be encouraged to complete their online, self-paced induction.

The link to the induction is

<https://greateasternwheatbelt.velpic.net/#register?key=PB0MHQH9FIB>

FCOs are asked to circulate the link among brigades.

5.7 Roadside verges

The following areas were identified as requiring attention by the Shire in terms of either hazard mitigation or firebreak inspections:

- The land around the Hines Hill fire shed
- The Hines Hill townsite
- Burracoppin townsite behind the houses and the pub.
- Cramphorne/Muntadgin Road
- Hobby farms in Nangeenan/Hines Hill

5.8 Restricted burning and issuing of permits

Merredin VFRS has requested an extension to Restricted Burning so they can carry out their hazard reduction burns in the townsite.

CBFCO instructed that no further permits be issued to the general public due to the dry conditions.

5.9 Fire Vehicle Identifier Labels

All previously issued fire vehicle identifier labels will have expired in September 2024. Brigade members who require new labels should contact the ESO.

5.10 Schedule of new appliances

ESO showed the projected timeline for appliance replacements.

CEO will discuss with ESO and CBFCO out of session to discuss starting the process for requesting new sheds/stations.

5.11 General reminders

- Volunteers are reminded to wear appropriate PPE at all times on the fire ground. Volunteers requiring PPE to be issued or replaced are to contact the ESO.
- DFES Com Cen 1800 198 140.
 - Report arriving and departing from the fire ground
 - Request additional support such as VFRS, Police, Ambulance, Western Power, Water Corp or ARC Infrastructure
- Northam Regional Duty Co-ordinator (RDC) 1800 966 077 is also a resource available to FCOs at incidents.
 - Request air support
 - Request advice about managing your incident
- Incident reports
ESO to send a checklist of information needed for reports to the FCOs

5.12 Other general business/around the table

Training. FCO training, first aid training and off road driver training were requested for Merredin next year.

Hines Hill car fridge. A year or two ago Hines Hill brigade received a Western Power grant to buy a car fridge. However, the new Tatra came with a car fridge, so the first one is now to excess to requirements, and they'd like to pass it on to another brigade that wants it.

Unclaimed funds. Some brigades have unclaimed funds but brigades are struggling to meet the requirements to have the funds released. Can the Shire help brigades claim them?

ABN/incorporation. Advice has been sought from DFES Northam confirming that brigades do not need to have an ABN or be incorporated in order to hold a bank account.

Harvest Ban exemptions. DBFCO asked if Collgar Wind Farm had been given any exemptions. Exemptions for Total Fire Bans have to be requested to and approved by DFES, exemptions for Harvest Bans can only be issued by the Shire. Collgar Wind Farm have never been given any formal exemptions by the Shire of Merredin.

Firefighting requirements for chaser bins. Clarification was sought on discussion from previous years as to whether there were minimum firefighting requirements for chaser bins. This was a DOAC recommendation that Shire implement minimum requirements, but the BFAC last year ultimately decided that while most members supported the concept in principle, it wasn't a problem in the Shire of Merredin at this stage so no minimum standards would be recommended; this decision may be revisited at a future time if it becomes an issue locally. There was no support locally for the other DOAC recommendation of banning trailer units.

6.0 Next Meeting

The next meeting of the BFAC will be the AGM, taking place in March 2025 on a day to be confirmed.

7.0 Close

There being no further business, the Chief thanked those in attendance and declared the meeting closed at 5.28pm