



Shire of Merredin

Innovating the Wheatbelt

OUR COMMUNITY VISION

“Merredin is a sustainable regional centre with a bright future.”

Minutes

Bushfire Control Officers

Annual General Meeting

18 March 2021

4.00 pm

Old Library – North Merredin Primary School Precinct,
22 Coronation Street, Merredin

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1.0 Open

The Chair opened the Meeting at 4.00 pm noting that a quorum was present and welcomed all in attendance.

2.0 Attendance and Apologies

Delegates

Name	Organisation	Position
Stephen Crook	Collgar Brigade	Chief Bushfire Control Officer Chair Fire Weather Officer
John Flockart	Korbelka Brigade Bruce Rock Brigade	Deputy Chief Bushfire Control Officer/Captain
Nigel Edgecombe	Burracoppin South Brigade	Fire Control Officer / Fire Weather Officer
Steve Higgins	Collgar Brigade	Captain
Kael Crees	Collgar Brigade	Lieutenant
Cam Gethin	Hines Hill Brigade Kellerberrin Brigade	Fire Control Officer / Fire Weather Officer
Chris Hooper	Korbelka Bruce Rock Brigade	Fire Control Officer / Fire Weather Officer
John Goodier	Korbelka Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Darren Major	Muntadgin Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer
Michael Caughey	Nukarni/Nokaning Brigade Nungarin Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer

Officers

Name	Organisation	Position
Andrina Prnich	Shire of Merredin	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Calvin Shotter	Shire of Merredin	Executive Manager Emergency Services

Non-Voting Delegates

Name	Organisation	Position
Cr Mal Willis	Shire of Merredin	Deputy President
Cr Phil Van Der Merwe	Shire of Merredin	Council Delegate
Cr Mark McKenzie	Shire of Merredin	Councillor

Apologies

Name	Organisation	Position
Neil Smith	Nukarni/Nokaning Brigade Nungarin Brigade	Fire Control Officer / Fire Weather Officer
David Beck	Burracoppin South Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer
Paul Wanless	Muntadgin Brigade	Fire Control Officer / Fire Weather Officer
Glen Crees	Collgar Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Cr Julie Flockart	Shire of Merredin	President
Mark Dacombe	Shire of Merredin	Temporary Chief Executive Officer

3.0 Confirmation of Minutes

- 3.1 That the Minutes of the previous Bush Fire Control Officers Annual General Meeting held on 24 June 2020 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

Moved: Darren Major

Seconded: Stephen Crook

Carried

4.0 Business Arising from Previous Minutes

- Risk Management – Resource to Risk
- The shed at Collgar requires replacement;
- South Burracoppin water tank;
- Muntadgin water tanks and access;
- Muntadgin shed roller door;
 - Noted: The roller door has been re-reported to the Shire Ranger for repairs; and
- DFES Permit forms – still valid.

The Chair advised that the Shire would address the above items in its report.

5.0 Election of Officer Bearers – 2021/2022 Fire Season

To nominate for the vacant positions, nominations must be made by an accredited Fire Control Officer. Calvin Shotter was nominated as Returning Officer.

The Returning Officer declared all Bush Fire Brigade positions vacant and called for nominations for the below positions:

Moved: John Flockart

Seconded: Stephen Higgins

Carried

Chief Bush Fire Control Officer

Nominations for Chief Bush Fire Control Officer were received for:

Stephen Crook

Moved: Michael Caughey

Seconded: Nigel Edgecombe

There being no further nominations, Stephen Crook was re-elected to the position of Chief Bush Fire Control Officer. Stephen Crook accepted the position of Chief Bush Fire Control Officer.

Carried

Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer

Nominations for Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer were received for:

Michael Caughey

Moved: John Flockart

Seconded: Chris Hooper

There being no further nominations, Michael Caughey was elected to the position of Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer.

Carried

Fire Control Officers

Nominated: As listed below.

That the following people being appointment as Fire Control Officers of the Shire of Merredin for the 2021/22 fire season:

Name	Brigades
Chris Barnett	Burracoppin
Nigel Edgecombe/David Beck	Burracoppin South
Steve Higgins/Glenn Crees / Stephen Crook Kael Crees <i>subject to appropriate training</i> Jordan Lynch <i>subject to appropriate training</i>	Collgar
Colin Miller / Cam Gethin	Hines Hill
Chris Hooper / John Goodier / John Flockart	Korbelka
Darren Major / Paul Wanless	Muntadgin
Michael Caughey/Neil Smith Phil Gray <i>subject to appropriate training completed</i>	Nukarni/Nokanning
Phil Van Der Merwe <i>Subject to becoming registered member of a bush fire brigade</i> Calvin Shotter	Shire of Merredin

Moved: Steve Higgins

Seconded: John Goodier

Carried

Fire Weather Officers

Nominated: As listed below

That the following people be appointed as Fire Weather Officers of the Shire of Merredin for the 2021/22 fire season.

Name	Brigades
Chris Barnett	North East
Nigel Edgecombe	South East
Neil Smith	North
Chris Hooper	South West
Stephen Crook	Central
Paul Wanless	South
Cam Gethin	West

Moved: John Flockart

Seconded: Darren Major

Carried

Dual Fire Control Officers

Nominated: As listed below.

That the following people be re-appointed as Dual Fire Control Officers of the Shire of Merredin for the 2021/22 fire season.

Name	Brigades
Chris Hooper / John Flockart	Bruce Rock
Cam Gethin and Colin Miller	Kellerberrin
Michael Caughey / Neil Smith	Nungarin
Darren Major / Paul Wanless	Narembeen
Chris Barnett	Westonia

Moved: Nigel Edgecombe

Seconded: John Flockart

Carried

6.0 Brigade Reports

6.1 Chief Bushfire Control Officer

A relatively quiet year on the fire front but also a difficult year to manage with the onset of the covid virus. Our March 2020 AGM had to be postponed until June, and we saw the extension of our Restricted Burning Period through until the end of April due to the amount of resources that were tied up at coastal fires and lockdown border patrols. We also had the Commissioner impose a Prohibited Burning period on the 20 May due to the forecast super storm that was to hit the state on 24-25 May.

Brigades turned out to thirteen incidents:

Three harvest fires, two railway fires, one haystack, one controlled burn, one truck, one house and a pole fire at Burra two weeks ago.

The Colgar 1.4 attended the Red Gully fires maned by FRS crew.

The Nuk/Nok 4.4 went to Wundowie with FRS Crew.

Korbelka 2.4 Went to Wooraloo fires with BFB crew.

No Injuries were reported, but we do have private vehicles damages claims pending.

Several issues arose from those out of the area fires, insurance and training of the FRS vollies in Bush Fire Trucks, volunteers going in and out of the Perth covid lockdown zone needing to self-isolate for two weeks, the DFES request for assistance not coming through the through the right channels, plus minor damage done to the Colgar 1.4.

9 HB, 7 TFB note that the TFB's on 5-7 January were not followed by a Shire HB, and that's a first for bans in the peak of fire season, The Shire is currently dealing with requests from the Wind and Solar farms managers wanting exemption from LG HB's so that maintenance contractors aren't stopped from working in the paddocks.

Brigade units and volunteers have answered the call and performed well. We have seen an increase in volunteers' numbers and requests for more training days in August this year.

In closing, I would like to thank the Shire for their efforts over a very difficult year of COVID-19 restrictions. A special acknowledgement of the great work done by past Ranger Stacey Jaskiewicz and Deputy CEO Andrina Prnich who stepped into the BFS role. We wish Stacey all the best for the future.

Moved: John Goodier

Seconded: John Flockart

Carried

The remaining reports were provided moved and seconded en bloc:

6.2 Shire of Merredin

The Shire of Merredin were sad to see the departure of Ms Stacey Jaskiewicz in February 2021. Stacey made a tremendous effort to do everything in her power to assist the operational needs of each brigade.

In attending a number of your brigade meetings, Stacey was able to resolve some long outstanding volunteer ID and uniform issuing as well as arrangements for volunteer training.

Servicing of all vehicle's were completed in 2020 and Stacey was also able to book a 2021 servicing program, prior to her departure, commencing Monday, 22 February. Any assistance from the Brigades in getting the vehicles to town for their respective services would be greatly appreciated. Her departing words included a reminder to give the vehicles a regular run into town in the off-season also.

The advertisement for the new Ranger is currently still open and will close on Thursday, 1 April 2021. Once filled, we intend that the new incumbent, along with the DCEO will be available to attend brigade meetings provided prior notice is given. There are still a number of new uniforms to be issued and our team will ensure that these are brought along to the meetings for sizing and distribution.

Thank you for those Fire Control Officers who have been sending through a copy of their Permit's to burn. As some of you may have been advised, Burning Permits will now be available through the Shire website. Once the web form is completed, a PDF form will be emailed through with the details completed, ready to be sent through to the relevant FCO. For those that would like to continue writing out paper permits, that's also fine. You will be able to fill in the details on their form with the information we have received.

We are pleased to advise that Council, at its ordinary meeting on 16 March 2021, appointed Mr Calvin Shotter as FCO for the Shire of Merredin.

We are busy preparing the Emergency Services Levy grant application at the moment and have also received notification of our success in receiving a \$29,000 grant from the SEMC which will allow us to work on the Local Emergency Management Arrangements review along with the commencement of two capability exercises. The contract role will allow us to work through the private water resource mapping tool

previously discussed and also to commence work on the outstanding resource to risk project.

With recent changes to the Bushfire Regulations for Total Fire Ban Prescribed Activities, we have received some simple fact sheets which will be circulated today. We have received notice from the Office of Bushfire Risk Management at DFES has commenced the evaluation of the Guidelines for Preparing a Bushfire Risk Management Plan that are used in the development of local government Bushfire Risk Management (BRM) Plans. This evaluation will inform the comprehensive review of the Guidelines that were first launched in 2015. The evaluation will be conducted over the first half of 2021. This will include a range of activities including stakeholder survey's, workshops and case studies.

DFES have advised that we will be invited to provide feedback on the process, outcomes and experiences of the BRM planning processes and associated tools in the coming months. We will report to the CBFCA for any further input as relevant.

John Flockart moved a vote of thanks to former Shire of Merredin Ranger, Stacey Jaskiewicz for all her efforts in her role in Emergency Management relating to the Bushfire Brigades. This was seconded by Steve Higgins who asked that it be noted that Stacey was a breath of fresh air and enthusiastic in her role.

The Chair requested that a letter of appreciation be sent to Ms Jaskiewicz on behalf of the brigades.

6.3 *Burracoppin Brigade*

Not present.

6.4 *Burracoppin South Brigade*

One fire attended over season.

Matt Barnett to undertake FCO course as soon as training becomes available.

6.5 *Collgar Brigade*

Shed at Collgar is rapidly deteriorating, now subject to white ants. Appropriate location of new shed would be the standpipe site.

It was requested that the brigades strongly consider an amalgamation with the re-established town brigade or South Burracoppin.

Recommendation:

That the Shire seeks quotes and pursues funding through DFES to replace the Collgar BFB shed to the standpipe site, corner Barnes Road and Bulls Head Road as well as the Burracoppin BFB shed to the Burracoppin town site, subject to identification of appropriate site on the Great Eastern Highway.

Moved: Steve Higgins

Seconded: Kael Crees

Carried

6.6 *Hines Hill Brigade*

No events this season

Cam Gethin intends to step down as Captain at this year's meeting, Luke Growden to step into position of Captain.

6.7 Korbalka Brigade

Since the last meeting we have conducted a hands on exercise in bushfire management with CBCO, DCBCO, DFES staff bush fire volunteers from Northam, Merredin Shire admin staff and Merredin police officers. The exercise was to test local in house protocols and find out what we didn't know. DFES were bringing the Northam based ICV to Merredin to test responses and procedures. On the back of their exercise we piggy backed a local hypothetical scenario with a fire uncontrolled looking to impact the north east parts of the Merredin town site. WAPOL joined in with welfare checks in the Booraan area to check some of their procedures. From the outset it was a full speed pressure morning with no one given much time to think. The shire staff rose to the occasion and managed to get IT support to the IMT control room and proved very much that almost anything was possible with little to no warning. The scenario was a fast moving fire that had been burning for several days and had once again escaped containment and was heading towards the Merredin townsite, from farmlands to reserves to threatening the Whitfield way subdivision. DFES were testing the deployment and setting up of the Northam based ICV, the ICV is being managed by Northam volunteer bush fire volunteers during the summer months and by Northam SES volunteers during the winter. The role of modern day information in a digital format coupled with the ability to manipulate that data proved extremely valuable. My personal thanks to all involved for allowing me the freedom to develop a potentially dangerous but possibly real scenario. Whilst the overall scope of the day was overwhelming, I believe it served well in trying to create the feel of urgency, the net result I think was that those involved got a strong sense of what could be expected of them and all rose to the occasion and I think learnt a great deal from participating. We must continue to test our ability to respond in future as the community has an expectation that someone else will be there in the future when they call, and only a very small proportion realise that they are the community and that they need to be part of the response.

Hopefully when the summer cools we will be able to look forward to further exercises to test response plans.

Whilst plans are made, often adopted, largely they are forgotten or at least filed away in the system and aren't readily available or findable when required at short notice.

6.8 Muntadgin Brigade

The brigades are pleased with the current membership levels.

The brigade conducted a burn-off around town site at the start of dry season.

The only other fire was at the Rockdale farm site.

Incident reports yet to be submitted

6.9 Nukarni/Nokanning Brigade

Currently have 35 active volunteers of which 8 are new in the last 12 months. Had an AGM in August, good turnout. Joe Alvaro officially retired after many years as an FCO. Phillip Gray was endorsed to be an FCO, just needs to do the course, which he hasn't yet. In October had 18 members turn up to run through the truck, with Phil van der Merwe attending. We found out that the foaming system was seized, so that has been fixed. Fire truck and a couple of volunteers attended the DFES bushfire scenario in Merredin in September.

2 fires during harvest, one at Nth Baandee and the other on Christmas Day at Burracoppin, with truck and 3 farmer units attending. On 3rd January the fire truck

was requested by DFES to attend the Wooroloo fire, two people from Merredin FRS volunteered to take the truck.

The Chair requested the Shire of Merredin to update FCO and Shire contacts list.

Moved: Darren Major

Seconded: John Goodier

Carried

7.0 General Business

7.1 Brigade Incident Reports

Brigade registrations at back of report to be refreshed at Pre-Season for Shire of Merredin Brigade

7.2 DFES ID Forms

This item was not addressed

7.3 Standpipe Keys

Calvin Shotter advised that two standpipes would be allocated with swipe card access this financial year.

7.4 Vehicle Fuelling

The Burracoppin South Brigade advised that they are yet to be equipped with a fuel card. The DCEO advised that she would follow-up on its location and also that one new card has recently been delivered to the Shire office and will be sent out in the next few days.

7.5 PPE

All brigades are currently comfortable that they all have adequate PPE however requested that the Shire continue to bring the equipment along for sizing to upcoming brigade meetings to ensure new members are being fitted with appropriate gear.

7.6 Training & Training Dates 2021

August is still noted as the preferred training months – Shire to liaise with DFES for training dates.

7.7 Firebreak Orders 2021/22

Recommendation:

To remain the same. That is:

Pursuant to Section 33 of the Bush Fires Act 1954, all owners and/or occupiers of land are required to carry out fire prevention work in accordance with the requisitions of this notice on or before 31st October each calendar year or within fourteen days of the date of becoming the owner or occupier of the land, should this be after the 31st October. All work specified in this Notice is to be maintained up to and including the 16th March the following calendar year.

Moved: John Flockart

Seconded: Steve Higgins

Carried

7.8 Prohibited/Restricted Burning Periods

Recommendation:

That the Restricted Burning Period will commence on Thursday, 16 September 2021, and will continue until Sunday, 14 November 2021 and from Friday, 17 February 2022 until Wednesday, 16 March 2022 (permits required); and

The Prohibited Burning Period will commence on Sunday, 15 November 2020, and will continue until Wednesday, 17 February 2020 (no burning).

Moved: John Goodier

Seconded: Stephen Crook

Carried

7.9 – Reinstatement of Merredin Town Brigade

Issues discussed include the need for the following activity.

Risk to Resource / Strategic Exercise

Volunteer drive eg attach to rates notices

Training – communicate through various channels (also volunteer drive)

Consideration of vehicle currently being designed. The Chair requested investigating the possibility of retaining the current 4x2 Crew Cab after it has been decommissioned as it is still in good condition and can be used by Hines Hill or Merredin. A new 4x2 Crew Cab will be purchased.

Recommend:

That the BFAC request the Shire of Merredin to support the re-establishment of the Merredin Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade and that the existing Fire Control Officers John Flockart and Glenn Crees call a meeting at their earliest convenience to nominate a captain, lieutenants and secretary.

Moved: John Flockart

Seconded: Steve Higgins

Carried

7.10 - Other Matters Raised

COVID-19 Vaccinations for Emergency Services workers (Attachment 2)

Email circulated advising the priority for volunteers and frontline workers.

Resource to Risk Exercise

This will be commenced as a part of the State Emergency Management Committee funding recently received by the Shire (once priority projects are completed).

Contact list to comms centre

This will be updated in time for the 21/22 season.

Unit radios / charging.

This is to be identified by new Ranger and followed up.

Lot size / fire fighting equipment on farms

Consideration to be given to the Shire in relation to contemporary farm sizes and the allocation of appropriate fire fighting equipment. A possibility is to advertise this to residents in the annual rates notices.

8.0 Next Meeting

Schedule of Meetings:

Pre-season - Fire Control Officers 2021	14 October 2021
Bush Fire Control Officers AGM 2022	March 2022

9.0 Close

There was no further business and the Chair closed the meeting at 7.00 pm and thanked all in attendance.