

Minutes



BUSH FIRE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

TO BE HELD IN THE SHIRE OF DENMARK COUNCIL CHAMBERS,
953 SOUTH COAST HWY, DENMARK
MONDAY, 8th September 2025, COMMENCING AT 5:30pm

Contents

1. DECLARATION OF OPENING.....	2
2. RECORD OF ATTENDANCE.....	2
3. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE PERSON PRESIDING.....	2
4. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES	2
5. REPORTS.....	3
5.1 DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES	3
5.2 CHIEF BUSHFIRE CONTROL OFFICER	3
5.3 COMMUNITY EMERGENCY SERVICES MANAGER	3
5.4 CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER	5
5. NEW BUSINESS OF AN URGENT NATURE.....	12
6. NEXT MEETING.....	12
7. CLOSURE	12

1. DECLARATION OF OPENING

2. RECORD OF ATTENDANCE

VOTING MEMBERS:

Cr Kingsley Gibson	Shire President, Council Delegate and Chairperson
Cr Clare Campbell	Council Delegate
Mark Guerin	Chief Bush Fire Control Officer
Craig Hughes	Fire Weather Officer (Proxy)
Geoff Bowley	Fire Control Officer
Graham Dixon	Fire Control Officer
Murray Brooker	Fire Control Officer
Gavin Butler	Fire Control Officer
Darin Hockley (Paul Beazley)	Volunteer Fire & Rescue Service Captain

NON VOTING MEMBERS:

Cam Famlonga	Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES)
Mark Guerin	Community Emergency Services Manager

STAFF:

David King	Chief Executive Officer
Angela Simpson	Corporate Planner and Policy Officer

VISITORS:

Nil

APOLOGIES:

Lez Baines	Fire Weather Officer
Chris Hoare	Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE PERSON PRESIDING

The Chairperson recognised everyone involved in the response to the weekend burn incident. Emergency services teams acted quickly and professionally to protect the community and limit damage.

4. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

ITEM 4.1

MOVED: Geoff Bowley

SECONDED: Cr Campbell

That the minutes of the Bush Fire Advisory Committee Meeting held on 1 July 2025, be confirmed as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

CARRIED: 9/0

For: Cr Kingsley Gibson, Cr Clare Campbell, Mark Guerin, Craig Hughes, Geoff Bowley, Graham Dixon, Murray Brooker, Gavin Butler, Paul Beazley

Against: Nil

5. REPORTS

5.1 DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

- No notable fire events other than bonfire explosion, where Denmark VFRS assisted with Casualty Care
- Localised flooding across the region, with the ground in some areas at saturation. Any more rain causing flooding
- Now entering a training phase of the year with multiple courses available across the region on eAcademy or through the Brigade.
- Pre-season training for the incoming High Threat period.
- Still chasing updates from DFES CAD and GIS Mapping on the Turnout update, made enquiries and factors of new staff and waiting on CAD updates to be able to add into ComCen.
- ESL Boundary Review
- Continue Prevention and Preparedness.

5.2 CHIEF BUSHFIRE CONTROL OFFICER

- The Shire has a preferred candidate from our CBFCO recruitment process and plans to finalise the appointment shortly. An announcement will be made once this process is complete.
- The annual skills refresher training is in progress.
- Another iteration of the basic training courses is being run on the weekend of the 20th & 21st of September at Ocean Beach shed. There are still spots available, so please notify the CESM of anybody who wishes to attend.
- Succession planning within the brigades is a focus and we are trying to expand the capabilities within brigades as well as develop redundancy.

5.3 COMMUNITY EMERGENCY SERVICES MANAGER

5.3.1 DRAFT SHIRE OF DENMARK BUSHFIRE BRIGADE STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

File Ref:	FIRE.1
Applicant / Proponent	Not applicable
Subject Land / Locality:	Not applicable
Disclosure of Officer Interest:	Nil
Date:	8 September 2025
Author:	Angela Simpson, Corporate Planning and Policy Officer
Authorising Officer:	Mark Guerin, Community Emergency Services Manager
Attachments:	5.3.1 DRAFT Bushfire Brigade Standard Operating Procedures

IN BRIEF

1. This report recommends that BFAC review the draft SOPs as outlined in the attached document with the aim of endorsing a suite of SOPs at a future BFAC meeting.

2. Once BFAC have endorsed these SOPs, they will represent the formal processes approved by the Shire's Chief Executive Officer for the management of bushfire brigades in the Shire of Denmark. As part of their leadership responsibilities, the CEO is accountable for ensuring that all staff and volunteers receive clear and practical work instructions.
3. It is understood that SOPs will continue to be developed as the need is identified either by staff or BFAC members.

LOCATION

4. N/A

BACKGROUND

5. With the repealing of many of the bushfire policies by Council, there is a need to ensure that where DFES does not have an appropriate SOP to direct bushfire volunteers, or where the matter is related to local bushfire brigade management, the Shire of Denmark has in place a set of clear operational instructions.

DISCUSSION / OFFICER COMMENTS

6. The Shire of Denmark adheres to DFES operational procedures for bushfire response, ensuring consistency with State-level emergency management standards. However, effective bushfire brigade management also requires clear, locally tailored work instructions to guide day-to-day operations. It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer to ensure that these instructions are developed and maintained, providing operational clarity and supporting the safe and efficient functioning of volunteer brigades.

CONSULTATION AND EXTERNAL ADVICE

7. In developing these draft Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), officers considered the suite of bushfire-related policies previously repealed by Council, recent SOPs developed by DFES, and identified gaps in documentation necessary to support effective bushfire brigade management.
8. The Bushfire Advisory Committee (BFAC) plays a vital role in endorsing these SOPs, ensuring they reflect operational realities and volunteer expectations. This collaborative approach strengthens governance and promotes consistency across brigade operations.

STATUTORY / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9. Nil

STRATEGIC / POLICY IMPLICATIONS

10. Nil

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11. Nil

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Environmental

12. There are no known significant environmental implications relating to the report or officer recommendation.

Economic

13. There are no known significant economic implications relating to the report or officer recommendation.

Social

14. There are no known significant social considerations relating to the report or officer recommendation.

RISK MANAGEMENT

15. A risk assessment has been conducted according to the Shire's Risk Management Governance Framework, and no risks have been identified regarding the officer's recommendation or the report.

5.4 CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

DFES plans to conduct an analysis following the September AFDRS fuel type update to assess the influence on the Fire Behaviour Index and Fire Danger Ratings resulting from moving Denmark from the Stirling Coast Fire Weather District to the Southern Forest Fire Weather District.

The Bureau of Meteorology has advised DFES that there can be no changes to the Fire Weather Districts during this financial year; however, DFES will prepare relevant case studies, such as Denmark, for consideration when an opportunity for changes arises.

DFES will consult with relevant stakeholders once the analysis is available to support those discussions.

5.4.1 POLICY UPDATES – REPEALING COUNCIL BUSHFIRE-RELATED POLICIES

File Ref:	FIRE.1
Applicant / Proponent	Not applicable
Subject Land / Locality:	Not applicable
Disclosure of Officer Interest:	Nil
Date:	8 September 2025
Author:	Angela Simpson, Corporate Planning and Policy Officer
Authorising Officer:	David King, Chief Executive Officer
Attachments:	P050109 – Ref Flag Warning P050105 – Brigade Unit Inspections P050108 – Donkey Motored Pump

P050104 – Property Ownership Details
P050106 – Bushfire Vehicle Fuel Facilities
P050101 – Burning of Garden Refuse
P050103 – Burning on Sundays
P050120 – Prescribed Fire Plan Guidelines and Templates
P050110 – Hazard Reduction Burning on Private Property
P050107 – Volunteer Bushfire Brigade Number and
Advisory Committee Structure

IN BRIEF

This report recommends repealing eight bushfire-related policies that are outdated, operational in nature, or better suited to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) managed by the Shire of Denmark or DFES.

P050109	Red Flag Warning. This policy only exists to refer the reader to the DFES operating procedure. This policy is redundant.
P050105	Brigade Units Inspections – This is not a policy and should be managed through an SOP.
P050108	Donkey Motored Pump Fire Truck Procurement. This is not a policy and should be managed through an SOP.
P050104	Property Ownership Details for Fire Control Officers. This is not a policy and should be managed through an SOP.
P050106	Bushfire Vehicle Fuel Facilities – This is not a policy and should be managed through an SOP.
P050101	Burning of Garden Refuse – It is inappropriate for this information to sit within a policy document. It needs to be managed through the annual Fire Break and Fuel Management Notice.
P050103	Burning on Sundays—Information related to this matter should be documented in the annual Firebreak and Fuel Management Notice.

VOTING REQUIREMENTS

16. Simple majority.

COMMITTEE AND AMENDED OFFICER RECOMMENDATION
MOVED: MURRAY BROOKER
That Council repeal

ITEM 5.4.1
SECONDED: GEOFF BOWLEY

- 1 P050109 – Red Flag Warning
- 2 P050105 – Brigade Unit Inspections
- 3 P050108 – Donkey Motored Pump
- 4 P050104 – Property Ownership Details
- 5 P050106 – Bushfire Vehicle Fuel Facilities
- 6 P050101 – Burning of Garden Refuse
- 7 P050102 – Camping and Cooking Fires
- 8 P050103 – Burning on Sundays
- 9 P050107 - Volunteer Bushfire Brigade Number and Advisory Committee Structure

CARRIED: 9/0

For: Cr Kingsley Gibson, Cr Clare Campbell, Mark Guerin, Craig Hughes, Geoff Bowley, Graham Dixon, Murray Brooker, Gavin Butler, Paul Beazley

Against: Nil

Reason: Addition of P050102 and P050107. The Shire already maintains the required register of brigades and their members, in accordance with the Bushfire Act and the Bush Fire Brigades Local Law. This record is held by DFES, who provide the information to the Shire, and the Shire provides any updates as required. The brigades are listed on the Shire's website together with the brigade areas. The Bushfire Brigade Local Law provides for Council to establish a brigade, its name and operational area.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

ITEM 5.4.1

That Council repeal

- 10 P050109 – Red Flag Warning
- 11 P050105 – Brigade Unit Inspections
- 12 P050108 – Donkey Motored Pump
- 13 P050104 – Property Ownership Details
- 14 P050106 – Bushfire Vehicle Fuel Facilities
- 15 P050101 – Burning of Garden Refuse
- 16 P050103 – Burning on Sundays

LOCATION

17. N/A

BACKGROUND

18. Officers review local government policies to ensure they remain relevant and effective. Many existing fire management-related policies are outdated, operational rather than strategic, or no longer meet the criteria for being formal Council policies.
19. A council policy should:

- Set the strategic direction and provide high-level guidance for the organisation,
- Provide a framework for decision-making, ensuring consistency and alignment with the Council's goals,
- Typically, be broad in scope focusing on the "what" and "why" of actions,
- Be designed to be enduring and not frequently changed.
- A policy should have the following elements:
 - Purpose: Why the policy needs to exist,
 - Scope: Who and what it applies to,
 - Policy Statement: The actual rule or principle,
 - Roles and responsibilities: Who is responsible for what, and,
 - Compliance and Review: How it will be monitored or reviewed.

20. The following policies were repealed by Council before 2025 and now form a suite of Standard Operating Procedures controlled by either DFES or under development in the Shire.

P050114	Bushfire Brigades – Vehicle & Harvest Movement Bans CONVERTED TO SHIRE OF DENMARK SOP
P050115	Bushfire Brigades – Call Out CONVERTED TO SHIRE OF DENMARK SOP – Bushfire Response Plan
P050116	Bushfire Brigades – Drugs & Alcohol REFER TO RELEVANT DFES OPERATIONAL STANDARDS
P050117	Bushfire Brigades – Driving Guidelines REFER TO RELEVANT DFES OPERATIONAL STANDARDS
P050118	Bushfire Brigades – T Card REFER TO RELEVANT DFES OPERATIONAL STANDARDS
P050119	Bushfire Brigades – First Situation Report REFER TO RELEVANT DFES OPERATIONAL STANDARDS
P050121	Bushfire Brigades – Usage of Drip Torches REFER TO RELEVANT DFES OPERATIONAL STANDARDS
P050112	Bushfire Brigades – Training Standards REFER TO RELEVANT DFES OPERATIONAL STANDARDS
P050113	Bushfire Brigades – Personal Protective Equipment on Fire Grounds REFER TO RELEVANT DFES OPERATIONAL STANDARDS

This report recommends that a further eight (8) policies be repealed. That will leave four (4) bushfire-related policies with Council. They are:

1. P050107 – Volunteer Bushfire Brigade Numbers and Advisory Committee Structure
2. Spending Authority of the Chief and Deputy BFCO.
3. P050110 – Hazard Reduction Burning on Private Property
4. P050120 – Prescribed Fire Plans

DISCUSSION / OFFICER COMMENTS

21. The officer recommends repealing several bushfire management-related policies as Council Policies and managing them as internal Operational Standards under the CEO's direction, or if they are operational and related to bushfire response, through the appropriate DFES Operational Standard. This recommendation is based on the need for flexibility, responsiveness, and operational specificity in bushfire management. By transitioning these policies to Operational Procedures, the Shire and DFES can ensure they are responsive to regulatory changes and tailored to specific needs.
22. Transitioning bushfire policies from under Council direction to bushfire management professionals or under the direction of the CEO reflects progress in developing robust internal procedures in this management area. Historically, the Shire of Denmark has prepared several local-level policies and procedures that guide the management and operations of the Bushfire Brigades under its control. The bushfire policies have been reviewed, and a number have been assessed as inadequate in several critical areas.
 - The procedure outlined in the policy is obsolete or outdated and no longer relevant to current operational needs.
 - Procedural content embedded within Council policy overlaps with existing DFES procedures, which are issued by the lead agency for bushfire management in Western Australia. Given DFES's authority and expertise in this area, their procedures should take precedence and be followed to ensure consistency, compliance, and alignment with state-level emergency management practices.

P050109 – Red Flag Warning

23. This policy only refers the reader to the DFES operating procedure. If an organisation creates a policy that solely exists as a referring point to another agency's directive, it can send the implicit message that "any external guidance we intend to follow should be formalised in a policy". Such a precedent suggests that external directives require internal policy endorsement to be valid. This is not the case.
24. Referencing another agency's documentation through a policy risks misalignment, as agencies occasionally change their documentation recording systems. DFES no longer has SOP 68, as referred to in P050109. The current DFES SOP related to Red Flag Warnings is SOP 3.02.07.

25. All Shire of Denmark bushfire volunteers are directed to follow the DFES operating standards during bushfire operations.
26. It is recommended that this policy be repealed.

P050105 – Brigade Unit Inspections

27. This policy's content is procedural in nature and, therefore, not appropriate for inclusion as a formal Council policy. It describes operational practices, specifically that Council mechanics are responsible for servicing, repairing, and ensuring the annual roadworthiness of brigade self-propelled firefighting vehicles, with associated costs charged to the Emergency Services Levy (ESL) budget.
28. These activities are part of routine fleet management and require flexibility to respond to changing operational needs. Prescribing them in a policy would unnecessarily constrain decision-making. In practice, vehicles are serviced by external providers when appropriate, depending on availability, expertise, or urgency.
29. It is recommended that the requirement for vehicles to be roadworthy and operationally ready be addressed through a Shire of Denmark Standard Operating Procedure.

P050108 – Donkey Motored Pump Fire Truck Procurement Policy

30. The intent of this policy—to ensure that fire trucks procured by Council are appropriate for the conditions in which they will be used and aligned with the training and experience of volunteer operators—is commendable and well-founded.
31. However, prescribing a specific type of vehicle within a policy framework may inadvertently limit the flexibility needed to respond to evolving operational requirements, technological advancements, and local circumstances. A more effective approach would be to manage these decisions through a fleet management and procurement procedure, which can outline the decision-making criteria and allow for professional judgment and adaptability.
32. This would ensure that vehicle selection remains responsive to current needs while aligning with the overarching objective of safety, suitability, and volunteer capability.
33. It is recommended that the conditions for fleet procurement be addressed through a Shire of Denmark Standard Operating Procedure.

P050104 – Property Ownership Details for Fire Control Officers

34. The current policy states that the Council will make property ownership details available to Fire Control Officers (FCOs) for their respective brigade areas, if required. However, this is primarily an operational matter and does not meet the standard elements of a formal policy, such as a defined purpose, scope, responsibilities, and governance considerations.
35. Furthermore, as FCOs operate as part of the Shire's extended workforce through their role as bushfire volunteers, access to relevant property information is already inherent to their responsibilities. It is, therefore, unnecessary for the Council to

formally approve or authorise this access through a policy. Instead, this practice is better managed through internal procedures that ensure appropriate use and data handling in line with privacy obligations.

36. It is recommended that the conditions for sharing property ownership information be addressed through a Shire of Denmark Standard Operating Procedure.

P050106 – Bushfire Vehicle Fuel Facilities

37. The Council has a policy stating that in an emergency, the Council permits the bushfire brigades to use fuel facilities at the Shire Depot for their bushfire vehicles and equipment, with costs set against the respective brigades' ESL budgets.
38. This matter is operational, not strategic. It is more appropriate in a procedure where the logistics of fuel access, authorisation, record-keeping and cost recovery can be detailed. Documenting this procedural matter outside of the policy also provides scope for variations that may need to occur in an emergency.
39. It is recommended that the conditions for fuel access during emergencies be addressed through a Shire of Denmark Standard Operating Procedure.

P050101 – Burning of Garden Refuse

40. Critical conditions relating to seasonal bushfire rules should not be buried within a general policy manual, as this can lead to confusion, oversight, or non-compliance. The Annual Fire Break and Property Management Notice is the primary and most visible tool for communicating fire-related requirements to the community. Embedding essential rules in a policy document risks them being overlooked, whereas including them in the annual notice ensures they are accessible, timely, and clearly understood by those who need to act on them.
41. It is recommended that this policy be repealed, and important information for the public should be noted in the Fire Break and Property Management Notice, which is endorsed by BFAC ahead of Council approval.

P050103 – Burning on Sundays

42. The policy states that the issuing of permits to burn on Sundays and public holidays is at the discretion of the Fire Control Officer. However, as a policy, it lacks sufficient detail and does not clarify how this discretion aligns with other relevant policies or regulatory frameworks. Notably, the Annual Fire Break and Property Management Notice does not address burning on Sundays. As a result, the current policy does not provide Fire Control Officers with the clarity or legal certainty needed to make informed decisions or ensure consistent and compliant practices.
43. It is recommended that this policy be repealed, and important information for the public should be noted in the Fire Break and Property Management Notice.

CONSULTATION AND EXTERNAL ADVICE

44. In developing this Council report to repeal several bushfire-related policies, the following sources and stakeholders were consulted: DFES regional operational staff,

DFES Operational Standards, Chief and Deputy Bushfire Control Officers, Community Emergency Services Manager – Shire of Denmark, and the Manager Community Services – Shire of Denmark.

STATUTORY / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

45. Nil

STRATEGIC / POLICY IMPLICATIONS

46. Nil

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

47. Nil

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Environmental

48. There are no known significant environmental implications relating to the report or officer recommendation.

Economic

49. There are no known significant economic implications relating to the report or officer recommendation.

Social

50. There are no known significant social considerations relating to the report or officer recommendation.

RISK MANAGEMENT

51. A risk assessment has been conducted according to the Shire's Risk Management Governance Framework, and no risks have been identified regarding the officer's recommendation or the report.

6. NEW BUSINESS OF AN URGENT NATURE

Nil

7. NEXT MEETING

It is recommended that the next meeting of the Bush Fire Advisory Committee be held on Monday the 8th of December 2025 at the Shire of Denmark Council Chambers commencing at 5:30pm.

8. CLOSURE