

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

20 MAY 2021

MINUTES

Present: Cllr Leslie T. Byrom CBE (Chair) & Councillors
Linda Maloney, Edna Finneran, Angela Coleman,
Lynne Thompson, Janet Grace, Brian Kenny, Lesley Rennie,
James Roberts, Paul Tweed, Allan Brame and
Andrew Makinson

Also Present: Anthony Boyle (Independent Person)

Apologies of absence were received from: Cllr Dan
Barrington, Cllr Doreen Knight and Cllr Lisa Preston

8. Chair's Announcement

Prior to the start of the meeting, information regarding general housekeeping was provided by the Chair to all in attendance.

Members were informed by the Chair that from the date of the local elections 3 Authority Members were lost and that new Members would join the Authority on 10th June 2021.

The Chair confirmed to all present that the proceedings of the meeting would be filmed and requested that any members of the public present who objected to being filmed, make themselves known. No members of the public voiced any objection therefore the meeting was declared open and recording commenced.

1. Preliminary Matters

The Authority considered the identification of any declarations of interest, matters of urgency or items that would require the exclusion of the press and public due to the disclosure of exempt information.

Members resolved that:

- a) no declarations of interest were made by individual Members in relation to any item of business on the Agenda
- b) no additional items of business were determined by the Chair to be considered as matters of urgency; and
- c) no items of business required the exclusion of the press and public during consideration thereof because of the possibility of the disclosure of exempt information.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Budget Authority, held on 25th February 2021, were approved as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

3. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER 2020-21 OCT TO APRIL UPDATE

Members considered Report CFO/018/21 of the Chief Fire, concerning the current risks contained within the Corporate Risk Register, the status of the risks and associated control measures, including any updates for the period September to March 2021.

Members were given a brief introduction of the report and were informed that as per a previous Internal Audit Report from April 2017, which required the Authority to consider its risk appetite and tolerance to ensure that the status of all risks is updated regularly, has now been completed.

Members added that it was very important as an Authority to be updated on all dangers and that Members understood the organisational risks.

Members resolved that:

The updated Corporate Risk Register for 2020/21 which incorporates the current status of those risks to April 2021, be approved.

4. 2020/21 FATAL FIRE AND FIFTEEN YEAR TREND ANALYSIS FATAL FIRE REPORT

Members considered Report CFO/022/21 of the Chief Fire, concerning:

- insight into the fatal fires responded to by Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service (MFRS) during 2022/2021;
- a detailed analysis of the fatal fires responded to by MFRS as a result of accidental dwelling fires over a fifteen-year period; and
- the approach adopted by MFRS in order to reduce the impact of such incidents on the communities of Merseyside.

A presentation was given to Members by GM (Group Manager) Mark Thomas about the report, highlighting the amount of fatalities from accidental dwelling fires have looked over the last 15 years. In 1992-93 fatalities were in the high teens, then they came down in 1999. In 2015-16 there were multiple fire deaths and sadly 2020-21 saw 7 deaths. The over 60s age group was more prominent, out of the 111 people who have died in the last 15 years and the 45-49 year age group which was a high figure was from deprived areas. The main reason for fires starting was due to carelessly disregarding smoking materials and staff have focused getting a message to communities to 'not smoke upstairs in their homes' and to now 'stop smoking' altogether. Information was given to Members about how deprived areas in England have more accidental dwelling fires and were told that by focusing on these areas it would have a significant impact on the amount of accidental dwelling fires.

Members were advised that it has been a challenging year for home safety during the Covid19 pandemic and that MFRS has been conducting risk assessments to go back into people's homes to promote Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSC).

Members thanked GM Thomas for his presentation and a question was asked in relation to the case studies - does MFRS receive information for people living alone from any other agencies such as Social Services, as MFRS already has such a good partnership with the NHS (National Health Service). Members were advised that the organisation has multiple partner agencies that they are engaged with to identify vulnerable people and that it can be challenging for MFRS to make that intervention. MFRS focus' on all vulnerable people including over 65's and those that live alone.

With regards to 6 out of the 7 fatalities receiving HFSCs (Home Fire Safety Checks), Members questioned if MFRS are targeting the right people. Due to the main result of these fatalities being caused was by smoking material and possibly alcohol, Members asked if people with mental health conditions should be pursued and if we can liaise with General Practitioners for this information or what could we do in the future. Members were advised that MFRS will be moving towards identifying people with mental health conditions as this is a factor involving fatalities and were told that this is a national piece of work. Data will be examined and a predictive prevention strategy will feature mental health in the future.

Members praised the service for the way staff care for any vulnerable people and added that they go above and beyond their duties.

Members mentioned that a lot of people who use food banks are vulnerable for various reasons and asked if the fire service would get referrals from there. Members were advised that this is a fantastic point and that it is already done by district officers.

Members suggested that the anti-social behaviour team staff could gather more information from people in deprived areas.

Members were informed of some statistics to reassure them that MFRS has adopted good strategy's. Although this year saw 7 fire deaths and 799 accidental dwelling fires occur, last year there were 5 fatalities and 928 accidental dwelling fires, and the year before that there were over 100 accidental dwelling fires. Injuries or near misses have reduced from 90 to 59. Members were re-assured that MFRS is making progress over the years.

Members declared that they felt re-assured from all the work MFRS does and added that as a member of society they will spread the word to their communities, especially the "stop smoking" message.

Members asked how MFRS got information of vulnerable people being discharged from hospitals and were informed that MFRS receive this from partner agencies and it was stressed that this is a high priority.

Members were pleased to hear that there were no deaths on the Wirral this year but queried if there was a reason why the death rate was higher in the past (as per the Fatalities in Accidental Dwelling Fires between 2006/7 to 2020/21 graph). Members were advised that the graph makes the fatalities look high but that the drawing in fact only goes up by individual numbers, so it only takes 1 death to make it look like a much bigger fatality rate. Over the years extensive Home Fire Safety work has been completed on the Wirral and partnerships have been formed, ensuring work to keep communities safe across the whole of Merseyside will continue.

A query was raised by Members about MFRS being aware of new oxygen suppliers and Members were assured that MFRS are aware and that they work closely with oxygen supply companies.

Members asked about social media being used to get safety messages to communities and were informed that MFRS regularly uses social media for this purpose.

Members resolved that:

The content of the appended reports, be noted.

5. Accessibility Audit

To consider Report CFO/023/21 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the progress made in acquiring an accessibility auditor to complete an audit of all Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority properties.

Members were given a brief introduction of the report.

Members queried the procedure of the bidding process to identify suppliers and were advised that the award of the contract complied with the Authority's contract standing orders and that in narrowing the potential bidders down from 73 suppliers the locality of suppliers was taken into account which would also have affected costs. From the submitted quotes the best value bidder was successful.

Members were advised that a report will be taken to Scrutiny Committee to look at the accessibility audit services outcome and report in more detail.

Members resolved that:

- a. the specification for the audit, be noted; and
- b. that Officers have awarded the contract for services of an accessibility audit to Wilkinson Cowan Partnership for a Total sum of £14,150, be noted.

6. Model Code of Conduct

To consider Report CFO/021/21 of the Acting Monitoring Officer, concerning the new model Code of Conduct for Members and approve its incorporation within the Authority's constitution.

Members were given an overview of the report.

Members agreed it would be good to just have one Code of Conduct across local authorities.

Members resolved that:

- a. the proposed code of conduct for Members as contained in Appendix A, be noted; and
- b. the LGA model code of conduct for Members template contained in Appendix B, be noted; and the incorporation of the new code of

conduct for Members into the constitution replacing the current version in force as contained in Appendix A, be approved.

7. Local Government Association Subscription 2021/22

To consider Report CFO/019/21 of the Acting Monitoring Officer, concerning Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority's (MFRA's) continued membership of the Local Government Association (LGA).

Members were given a brief overview of the report, highlighting that the LGA requested that each of its member authorities appoints a dedicated Equality and Inclusion Champion. For 2020/21 Cllr Jan Grace was appointed this role.

It was raised by Members that MFRA will continue its membership to the LGA and so a report should no longer be brought to the Authority requesting this. It was decided that only if MFRA chose to cancel its membership if Members determine as such.

Members resolved that:

- a. the Authority's continued membership of the LGA, for 2021/22, be noted;
- b. a 2.5% loyalty discount is applied to all Fire and Rescue Authorities, be noted;
- c. the Authority have signed up to the LGA's direct debit payment scheme from 2020/21 onwards, in order to receive an additional 2.5% discount, be noted;
- d. the content of the report, be noted; and
- e. the continuation of membership to the LGA for the future, be agreed.

Close

Date of next meeting Thursday, 10 June 2021

Signed: _____

Date: _____