

MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:			
DATE:	16 DECEMBER 2014	REPORT NO:	CFO/128/14
PRESENTING OFFICER	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	NICK SEARLE	REPORT AUTHOR:	GM LONGSHAW
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	N/A		
TITLE OF REPORT:	NRAT ASSURANCE VISIT 2014		

APPENDICES:	APPENDIX A:	NRAT ASSURANCE OCTOBER 2014 TIMETABLE
	APPENDIX B:	MFRS SUMMATIVE FEEDBACK

Purpose of Report

1. To advise Members of the outcomes of the recent assurance process conducted by the National Resilience Assurance Team (NRAT) of the National Resilience (NR) assets hosted by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority.

Recommendation

2. That Members note the contents of this report.

Introduction and Background

3. As Members will be aware the Authority hosts a number of NR assets including Urban Search and Rescue (USAR), Mass Decontamination (MD), Detection, Identification and Monitoring (DIM) and High Volume Pumping (HVP).
4. NRAT conduct annual assurance visits to all NR asset holding FRAs in order to gather evidence specific to the assurance objectives. The outcomes of this assurance process are reported to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) who retain overall strategic responsibility for National Resilience on behalf of the Government.
5. Historically, such assurance visits have focussed on one specific NR capability. The 2014/15 process departed from this methodology and adopted a broader, equally weighted approach that had the primary objective of confirming operational readiness across all capabilities within each FRA. Additionally the process sought to provide assurance that the roles and procedures outlined in the National Co-ordination and Advisory Framework (NCAF) are understood and integrated into FRA operational planning.

6. The outcomes of the assurance process seek to confirm that the statutory duties outlined in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and The Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007 in relation to National Resilience assets are being satisfactorily discharged. The process also assists NRAT in producing an annual report which as mentioned in paragraph 4, through the National Resilience Board, provides assurance to Government that all NR assets are capable of responding to a national scale incident with the required amount of competent personnel with equipment that is operationally fit for purpose.
7. The process also provides an efficient and accurate tool for producing factual information on which the FRA can refer to with a view to improving its performance.
8. The process uses a system of conformity or non-conformity to categorise the various levels of compliance against the assurance process criteria. It also records areas that can be identified as opportunities for improvement and similarly areas considered to be notable practice.

Summary of Assurance Process

9. The process accords with established principles within the Fire and Rescue Operational Assessment Toolkit and has pre-determined Key Areas of Assessment (KAAs) against which conformity/non-conformity is established.
10. These KAAs are:
 - **Prior to call preparation**
Deals with the FRA ability to mobilise NR assets to an incident.
 - **Mobilisation and support to the incident**
Deals with the FRA arrangements for managing the mobilisation of National Resilience assets and the provision of relevant information and support to responding crews.
 - **Command & Control**
Deals with the responsibilities and actions of attending personnel and the integration of the NR capability into planned or existing command and control arrangements.
 - **Operational Response**
Deals with the structures, policies and arrangements in place to allow attending crews to achieve the objectives of the incident.
 - **Monitoring and review**
Deals with the evaluation and recording of NR incidents and exercises.

- **Integration of National Resilience capability**
Deals with the integration of NR capability into planning assumptions for identified or emerging local risks.
 - **Multi-agency integrated response**
How does the FRA engage with other organisations and agencies to meet effective resolution to NR incidents?
11. The process also includes the completion of an assurance question set which is submitted to NRAT via their on-line recording system by the MFRS officer assigned as the single point of contact (SPOC) for NR matters. This question set is submitted a minimum of one month prior to the assurance visit.
 12. The assurance visit itself involves a series of interviews and consultations over 2 days with various staff and departments ranging from firefighter up to middle manager. The timetable is provided for indicative purposes at Appendix A.
 13. MFRS achieved a conformity rating in all 7 KAAs with no areas for improvement identified.
 14. The following were identified as areas of notable practice:
 - The integration of the NR capabilities (particularly USAR) as part of MFRS' front line emergency response.
 - MFRS' proactive use of the National Resilience Assurance Toolkit hosted within the National Resilience website.
 - MFRS were identified as the highest performing FRS in the country in regards to assurance toolkit reporting completion; with an average completion rate of 98.4%
 - MFRS' provision of personnel in excess of the National minimum standards that facilitates the ability to support major incidents within the region for more sustained periods.
 - Fire Control's knowledge of the NR capabilities and their engagement with FRSNCC in London.
 - Fire Control's protocols and procedures for ensuring information is disseminated within the department and across the Service to relevant stakeholders.
 - MFRS' ability to support, facilitate and manage National scale exercises (Joint Endeavour, Roaring Lion and Orion)
 - The use of values based appraisals to identify development needs as part of succession planning.
 15. NRAT's final report has been made available to the Principal Officers, Area Managers, Fire Control and the NR asset holding locations. A one page summative document has also been produced by NRAT and is provided at Appendix B of this report.

Equality and Diversity Implications

16. There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

Staff Implications

17. There are no staff implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications

18. The findings from the assurance process confirm that MFRS are according with the requirements of:

- Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 – section 9
- The Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007 – Articles 3, 4 and 5
- National Framework Document – section 3.4

Financial Implications & Value for Money

19. In sustaining high standards of response in regard to its NR capabilities MFRS will continue to receive grant support from Government to maintain and support the NR capabilities.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

20. MFRS' continued high standards in regards to NR support and integration ensures that our personnel are best equipped and resourced to support local, regional and national scale incidents.

21. There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

Contribution to Our Mission: *Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Firefighters*

22. MFRA' continued proactive approach to NR also affords our personnel and communities the benefit of enhanced equipment and procedures with specially trained personnel with the ability to provide additional resources to support local, regional and national scale incidents.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AM	Area Manager
DIM	Detection Identification and Monitoring
FRSNCC	Fire and Rescue Service National Coordination Centre
HVP	High Volume Pumping
KAA	Key Area of Assessment
MD	Mass Decontamination
MFRS	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service
NCAF	National Coordination Advisory Framework
NR	National Resilience
NRAT	National Resilience Assurance Team
SPOC	Single Point of Contact
USAR	Urban Search and Rescue