



# Statement of Assurance

## 2014/15



**SAFER, STRONGER COMMUNITIES; SAFE  
EFFECTIVE FIREFIGHTERS**

[www.merseyfire.gov.uk](http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk)

# Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority

## ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2014/15

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# MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

## ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2014/15

### 1. Foreword

Fire and Rescue Authorities are accountable for their performance and as such, information regarding effectiveness and value for money should be accessible, transparent and accurately reported to the communities they serve. Along with legislation which governs how FRA's provide their services, the [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2012](#) requires Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (MFRA) to produce this Annual Statement of Assurance. The Statement of Assurance focuses on Authority governance, performance and activity that took place between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015.

The aim of this Statement of Assurance is **'to provide an accessible way in which communities, Government, local authorities and other partners may make a valid assessment of their local fire and rescue authority's performance.'**

*DCLG Guidance on Statements of Assurance for FRA's in England'*

Merseyside FRA has faced budget cuts on an unprecedented scale over the period. These cuts have had a significant impact on organisational capacity and have resulted in a 33% reduction in the number of immediately available fire engines (from 42 to 28). This has had an impact on the speed and weight of attack when responding to incidents and in the ability of the Service to maintain the levels of community safety intervention delivered over the last decade. During 2014/15, following consultation, we closed Allerton fire station on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 and concluded consultation on the merger\* of fire stations in Knowsley and Wirral. We continue to consult on proposals to merge a further two stations into a new location in St Helens town centre. It is expected cuts will continue to 2020. Whilst you should be reassured that the Service will continue to deliver a fast response to an emergency it is an unfortunate reality that the weight of this response (speed of the second and third responding fire engine) will not be at the levels delivered prior to the cuts.

We hope that you find this Statement of Assurance useful and that it explains the context and scale of the challenges faced by the Authority now and in the future. It is intended to direct readers to other published reports, rather than repeating existing material and as a result it contains several hyperlinks. If you require copies of any documents or have any comments or questions please contact Jackie Sutton – Integrated Risk Management Planning Officer on 0151 296 4563 or by email on [jackiesutton@merseyfire.gov.uk](mailto:jackiesutton@merseyfire.gov.uk)

\*Merger = closure of two fire stations, replacing them with one new fire station in an optimal location.

## 2. [Introduction](#)

Merseyside is a Metropolitan County in the north west of England, which straddles the Mersey Estuary and includes the metropolitan districts of Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral.

Merseyside spans 249 square miles (645 Km<sup>2</sup>) of land containing a mix of high density urban areas, suburbs, semi-rural and rural locations, but overwhelmingly the land use is urban. Its largest business district is in Liverpool City Centre, but Merseyside is also a polycentric county with five metropolitan districts, each of which has at least one major town centre and outlying suburbs.

Mid 2013 estimated figures showed that Merseyside has a population total of 1,391,113 which is a 0.72% increase on the 2011 Census figures. The population is split 48.6% male and 51.4% female. Merseyside has a lower proportion of children (16.5%) and higher proportions of working age residents (66.3%) and older people (17.2%) than the North West averages (*Census 2011*). Our [Profile of Merseyside Demography, Equality and Diversity](#) report outlines the communities we serve.

*As a consequence of Government grant cuts between 2011/12 – 2015/16 Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority have delivered £20.4 million of savings by March 2015 with further approved savings of £5.2 million to be actioned in 2015/16 -2016/17. This presents the Authority with significant challenges as it seeks to minimise the impact on the levels of service provided to the public. A summary of the budget challenges and plans for 2014/15 is available in both the [Service Delivery Plan 2015/16](#), [IRMP 2013/16](#) and [IRMP Supplement 2015/17](#).*

The organisation is, however, meeting these challenges from a position of strength following a period in which we have significantly reduced fires, fire deaths and injuries and made Merseyside a safer place.

However we must remain vigilant, as our performance has begun to plateau, and we are mindful of the cuts being applied to other public services and the indirect impact that this can have on the performance of the Authority. As such we will continue to work with our partners to best respond to the changing public sector environment.

We have worked hard over the last year to anticipate the impact of the cuts and reduce the effect they will have on our communities. By planning using natural retirement patterns and the use of reserves it has not been necessary to make any staff compulsorily redundant. However when the results of the Comprehensive Spending Review for 2016/17 are announced in late 2015 this may not be an option available to the Authority for the future.

Our prevention work has been widely acknowledged and has been duly replicated around the world; however we have had to get even smarter, sharing risk data and intelligence with partners to ensure we identify and target our efforts towards the most vulnerable and at risk within our communities.

We still give universal help and advice, but we will now target high risk homes and residents over 65 years of age.

We will continue to fit smoke alarms FREE of charge to those over 65 and those referred by other agencies who understand fire risk or our staff as part of specific campaigns following fatal fires or otherwise i.e. Private landlords accreditation scheme.

Other Merseyside residents can access free fire safety advice on request, this can include the installation of smoke alarms if necessary and the person requesting the service is able to cover the unit cost of the alarm (this service is provided by volunteers on a cost recovery only basis).

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority actively supports the reduction of Hate Crime across Merseyside and has introduced Safe Havens across all fire stations. We use target hardening techniques to prevent incidents and/or reduce the effects on victims.

To date we have managed to maintain a very fast response to incidents (despite a reduction in appliance numbers) and by targeting our prevention activity and working smarter, we are still having a real impact on the safety of the people of Merseyside.

MFRA published the [Service Delivery Plan 2015/16](#) in June 2015 and the [IRMP Supplement 2015/17](#) in June 2015 to respond to the changing risks and needs within our communities. This is a 2 year supplement to the existing [IRMP 2013/16](#) published to take account of the Government grant being released for 2 years (2015/17). The Service Delivery Plan establishes the standards of performance expected and reported on the 2014/15 outcomes. The Integrated Risk Management Plan sets out how we will continue to deliver our services to meet local risks. It describes a noticeably leaner but dynamic Service delivered in the most effective and efficient way. Anyone who needs us in an emergency will still receive one of the fastest responses in the country.

### **3. Governance arrangements**

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority was established on 1st April 1986 by the Local Government Act 1985 which made provision for joint authorities to be established in the major metropolitan areas following the abolition of the metropolitan county councils.

Although the Authority does not have all the powers of a Council, it is nonetheless a Local Authority in its own right, separate and distinct from the constituent councils. It is therefore subject to many of the same rules and regulations which govern other local authorities.

#### **The Authority**

The Authority is made up of 18 Members, all of whom must be a Councillor elected to one of the five constituent district councils within Merseyside (Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral). There is also an independent person on the Authority. Members of the Authority have a responsibility to the whole community of Merseyside and are directly accountable to the people of Merseyside for the running of the Fire and Rescue Service. All Members meet together as the Fire and Rescue Authority. Meetings of the Authority are normally open to the public and details are published on our website [Merseyfire.gov.uk - Authority](http://Merseyfire.gov.uk - Authority).

The Authority has ultimate responsibility for decision making but has delegated many decisions to committees as part of their Terms of Reference (available to view in the Constitution) and officers. Members work closely with officers (the staff employed by the Authority) in developing policies, plans and strategies to give direction to the Service and to ensure that services are delivered in line with the Authority's objectives.

There are a number of organisations which are independent from the Authority, but have an impact on its service areas. In order that the Authority can maintain effective partnerships with a number of these organisations, Members of the Authority sit on the various committees and forums that are responsible for them:

- Association of Metropolitan Fire & Rescue Authorities
- Fire Support Network
- Local Government Association
- Merseyside Brussels Office
- National Joint Council
- North West Employers' Organisation
- North West Fire and Rescue Forum
- The Toxteth Firefit Hub Charity

### **Our legal responsibilities**

The full [Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority](#) Constitution and Governance can be found on our website. It details how the Authority conducts its business and includes detailed procedures and codes of practice including:

- Members code of conduct
- [Authority Constitution 2014/15](#) and allowances
- Meetings, agendas and decisions
- [Complaints Procedure](#)

The Authority has approved and adopted a [Code of Corporate Governance](#) which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE framework [CIPFA Delivering Good Governance in Local Government](#). The key principles of the Authority's Code of Corporate Governance are outlined below;

Three high level principles underpin Corporate Governance:-

- Openness and inclusivity
- Accountability
- Integrity

### **The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework**

The Government has a responsibility to ensure that the public is adequately protected. For fires and other emergencies it does this by providing significant financial resources, giving authorities the power to raise additional local funding, and maintaining a statutory framework within which a local fire and rescue authority should operate.

The [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2012](#) sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for FRA's in England. It recognises that operational matters are best determined locally by FRA's in partnership with their communities.

The priorities are:

- To identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their area may face, make provision for prevention and protection activities and respond to incidents appropriately.
- To work in partnership with their communities and a wide range of partners locally and nationally to deliver their service
- To be accountable to communities for the service they provide.

## 4. [Overview of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service](#)

### Our Mission, Aims and Values

Our Mission; "Safer, Stronger Communities; Safe, Effective Fire-fighters", our aims and our values run as a golden thread through everything we do.

### Our Aims

#### Excellent Operational Preparedness

We will provide our fire fighters with the training, information, procedures and equipment to ensure they can safely and effectively resolve all emergency incidents.

#### Excellent Operational Response

We will maintain an excellent emergency response to meet risk across Merseyside with safety and effectiveness at its core.

#### Excellent Prevention and Protection

We will work with our partners and our community to protect the most vulnerable through targeted local risk reduction interventions and the robust application of our legal powers.

#### Excellent People

We will develop and value all our employees, respecting diversity, promoting opportunity and equality for all.

We plan our actions by embedding our **core values** into the way we deliver our services:

- Make a positive difference to our community;
- Provide an excellent and affordable service
- Everyone matters
- Respect our environment
- Our people are the best they can be.

## Responsibility & accountability of the Chief Fire Officer

The Chief Fire Officer is the Head of Paid Service in law under S. 4 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989. The Chief Fire Officer is responsible for;

- *Ensuring that the staffing needs of the organisation are adequate to perform the Authority's statutory functions*
- *Ensuring that the discharge of the Authority's functions is efficiently and effectively co-ordinated*
- *Arranging for and ensuring the proper appointment and management of the Authority's staff.*
- *Arranging for and ensuring the effective organisation of the Authority's staff in an appropriate structure with relevant departments.*

**The Chief Fire Officer is accountable to the Authority.** Details of the powers delegated to the Chief Fire Officer (and in their absence the Deputy Chief Fire Officer,) who may further delegate to any member of either the Executive Team or the Strategic Management Group as appropriate, can be found on page 43 of the [MFRA Constitution 2014/15](#).

The success of our service provision is largely dependent on the skills, abilities and dedication of our staff. That is why we invest resources in ensuring that our people are the best they can be through training and development, appraisal, health and wellbeing. Our aim at MFRA is to have Excellent People:

***'We will develop and value all our employees, respecting diversity, promoting opportunity and equality for all'.***

Staffing levels, including the number of officers, can be found on the [DCLG 2015](#) (Department for Communities and Local Government) and [CIPFA 2015](#) (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) websites. A log in is required.

## Organisational Development

Performance appraisal and personal development reviews are based on MFRA's personal values. Each member of staff has their individual training, learning and development needs identified by their line manager. This in turn informs an annual training needs analysis. This is used to identify new equipment, methods of working, health and safety risks, and compliance with legislation or succession planning which have arisen, or may, arise in the coming years.

## Leadership Development

MFRA recognises the huge contribution our managers and leaders can make to our organisation. To support their development, and that of emerging managers, and to ensure the changing requirements of the organisation are being met, we invest both time and training hours in these individuals.

Leadership courses such as CMI (Chartered Management Institute) Levels 3 and 5, Institute of Occupational Safety and Health) IOSH and National Examination Board of Safety and Health (NEBOSH) are attended by both uniformed and non-uniformed staff. Uniformed staff interested in development into the role of

supervisory manager can enter the Supervisory Management Gateway and attend Operational Incident Command courses at the Fire Service College. MFRA supports staff in the Institute of Fire Engineers (IFE) examinations. Operational managers are offered courses aimed at developing their knowledge, skills and values to enable them to effectively take over command on the incident ground.

### **Staff consultation - Representative Bodies**

Uniformed staff are represented by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and the Fire Officers Association (FOA), non-uniformed staff by UNISON, UNITE and GMB. All are invited to take part in consultation around changes to staffing levels or conditions of service, the IRMP and any changes to the service MFRA provide. All are active members of Joint Secretaries, which is a meeting which brings together the representative bodies with the Authority's Consultation Manager and our Director of People and Organisational Development.

### **Staff Survey**

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority conducted a staff survey, facilitated by an independent organisation (People Insight), between 16th June and 28th July 2014. 68% of staff took part.

Participation in the survey was more than twice that of the last employee survey despite being conducted at a difficult time for the organisation against a background of industrial action around the national firefighter pension dispute, four years of Government cuts and the resulting reductions in the number of staff employed in recent years.

As a result of the report MFRA has developed a set of engagement principles which are being embedded across the service.

A summary report on the Staff Survey results provided by People Insight was considered by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority at its meeting on the 2nd of October, this report summarises all of the results produced by People Insight and can be found on the MFRA website [Staff Survey Results 2014](#)

### **Equality and Diversity**

The public sector Equality Duty, of the Equality Act 2010, requires public bodies to consider all individuals when carrying out their day to day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. MFRA is committed to considering equality and diversity in the way we provide our services and the [MFRA Equality and Diversity Statement](#) and supporting documentation is available on the website.

We have published an [Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2014/15](#) which sets out how we have met our legal obligations and improved outcomes for our communities.

## 5. [The risks we face in Merseyside](#)

The [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#) requires every fire and rescue authority to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan ([IRMP Supplement 2015/17](#)) to develop services to respond to those risks and help prevent incidents occurring. [The Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#) also places a legal duty on local emergency responders to carry out assessments on the risks to their area and publish them. The [Merseyside Community Risk Register](#) identifies the areas of potential risk to the population and infrastructure of Merseyside and the nature of that risk. The likelihood of an event occurring has been assessed using historical evidence and projected occurrence data relating to the risk occurring over a five year period at the magnitude reflected within the outcome description. The potential impact of such an emergency has been assessed with regard to health, social, economic and environmental effects in accordance with national guidance.

### Social Risk

We know that deprivation and environment can increase risk from fire and other emergencies. In Merseyside there are some areas of affluence, for example in West Wirral and North Sefton, but large areas of Merseyside fall within the highest ratings of social deprivation. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2015 indicate that 32 per cent of the wards in Merseyside are ranked in the top 10 per cent of the most deprived wards in England with high levels of social exclusion and crime. In addition, all the local authorities in Merseyside are within the top 20 per cent of the most income deprived in England. We consider this when we plan our services and target those services at people we identify as most at risk. We are particularly targeting the increasing number of older people who are now remaining in their own homes.

### Environmental & Economic Risks

There are other types of risk too. Other risks within the Merseyside area include:

- Coastline on the west of the MFRA area.
- John Lennon Airport
- Under and over ground rail links, including under the River Mersey
- Two road tunnels under the River Mersey
- Two premier league football stadia
- Liverpool City Centre and many heritage buildings
- Dock estates in Liverpool and Birkenhead
- Beaches and areas of natural beauty such as Freshfield Pinewoods, Hilbre Island and Carr Mill Dam
- RAF Woodvale airfield, Altcar Army camp and rifle range.
- Industrial estates accommodating large factories down to small industrial units.
- Ten Control of Major Accident Hazard (COMAH) sites such as Nustar petrochemical plant.
- Large shopping areas including Liverpool One in the City Centre.
- Three Universities with large blocks of student accommodation both in and outside the city centre.

## 6. Risks beyond our borders

### National & Local Resilience

Over recent years large scale emergency incidents have increased in the UK. This has been due to climate change and terrorist activities. As a direct result of this the Government introduced the 'National Resilience' project.

MFRA provides a substantial commitment to National Resilience by hosting an Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team, a USAR canine team, USAR Subject Matter Advisors (SMA's), a High Volume Pump (HVP), a Detection, Identification and Monitoring (DIM) team, Incident Response Unit (IRU) and Mass Decontamination Disrobe unit (MDD). We also have a total of 5 type B flood rescue teams declared on the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) national flood rescue asset register and one Subject Matter Adviser. All of these assets are available at all times for national deployment.

In 2012 MFRA extended its USAR role, becoming a member of the UK International Search and Rescue Team (UKISAR), the internationally deployable International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) heavy classified USAR team. This team is available for deployment to incidents anywhere in the world.

Under Sections 13 and 16 of the [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#) MFRA are required to have in place mutual assistance arrangements with neighbouring FRA's. These agreements are regularly reviewed.

### Management of Risk

The fire and rescue service is a 24 hour a day, 365 days a year operation and as a result MFRA produces plans that enable it to respond to any events that could threaten service delivery in Merseyside. These plans include:

- Service Delivery Plan 2015/16 for 2014/15 outcomes
- IRMP 2013/16 and IRMP Supplement 2015/17
- Budget 2014/15
- Corporate Risk Register 2014/15

All serve to identify and plan for existing and potential risks to the Authority's assets and services.

Our [Business Continuity Management Policy](#) provides clear and defined strategies to address the following:

- Total loss of any Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service Department.
- Significant/partial damage to any Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority Department.
- Significant/partial Failure of the Information Technology system.
- Loss of /damage to information/data
- Loss of/disruption to primary utilities.
- Loss of staff/Pandemic.
- Loss of suppliers.

Functional Business Continuity Plans have been prepared and are tested regularly.

## 7. [Our Services to the Community](#)

MFRA operates within clearly defined statutory and policy framework requirements as set out in the:

- [The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#)
- [The Fire and Rescue Services \(Emergencies\) \(Order\) 2007](#)
- [The Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)
- [Localism Act 2011](#)
- [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)
- [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2012](#)
- [Local Government Acts 1972 to date](#)

The [Service Delivery Plan 2015/16](#) highlights MFRA's commitment to delivering an excellent service to the communities of Merseyside. This document brings together actions from the [IRMP 2013/16](#), [IRMP Supplement 2015/17](#), District and Station Community Safety Delivery Plans, Functional, [Equality and Diversity](#) planning and details of outcomes from 2013/14. All these plans are available to view through the MFRA Portal [Service Delivery Plan Link](#).

### [Excellent Operational Response](#)

The Authority's priorities clearly stated in the [Service Delivery Plan 2015/16](#) are:

- To maintain an effective emergency response to meet risk across Merseyside with safety and effectiveness at its core
- The [Operational Response](#) function ensures that the Authority, on behalf of the public, is assured with regard to the readiness of its operational workforce, appliances, stations and equipment to respond appropriately and in a timely manner to emergencies, and that when we do respond our firefighters, procedures and equipment are safe and effective.
- The Operational Response function is led by an Area Manager who is responsible for the operational element of the MFRA workforce. This equates to approximately 752 people across the 25 Fire Stations, our Fire Control and Officer Group. It should be noted however, that our IRMP proposed reductions in the number of firefighters to achieve the £ 6.3m savings required by April 2016.

### [Prevention and Protection](#)

Priorities for the [Prevention and Protection](#) function are:

#### [Excellent Prevention](#)

- Working with partners and our community to protect the most vulnerable
- The four key drivers for MFRA's Prevention Strategy are; Home Safety, Road Safety – Road Traffic Collision Reduction, Arson/Anti-Social Behaviour Reduction and Youth Engagement

- The Prevention Team is led by the Area Manager for Community Risk Management. The work is led by teams in the five districts of Merseyside and each of these key areas also has a functional co-ordinator with responsibility for joining up prevention activity and improved outcomes for communities, including seasonal campaigns such as the bonfire period and community reassurance following incidents.

### *Excellent Protection*

- Working in partnership to reduce risk in the built environment
- MFRA has duties to enforce, consult and provide fire safety advice on matters relating to Community Fire Protection. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 is most commonly associated with Fire Authority enforcement; additional relevant legislation includes sub-surface railways, petroleum, fireworks and explosives, and building regulations.
- The Community Fire Protection (CFP) Policy was refreshed in October 2013 to:
  - Provide the rationale and basis of the Authority's risk based audit approach to CFP;
  - Provide strategic direction on the extent to which fire safety legislation applies;
  - Direct resources to ensure levels of fire protection are met and enforced as required in the relevant fire safety legislation;
  - Provide overarching direction for all CFP priorities, instructions and guidance

## **8. Our Performance**

The MFRA [Service Delivery Plan 2015/16](#) reports on performance for 2014/15 and establishes the Local Performance Indicators (LPI's) and service delivery standards for 2015/16. Performance against the LPI's is reported to Authority in the [Service Delivery Plan reports](#) and to Strategic Management Group and the Performance Management Group (PMG) on a monthly basis.

Budget cuts have meant that we have had to become smarter about how we target our prevention and protection work. This is reflected in both our planning and performance with fewer Home Fire Safety Checks carried out, but these are delivered to specifically targeted people identified in need of our intervention. Likewise our Unwanted Fire Signal Strategy has seen the number of incidents of this type that we attend reduce by 50%.

All Districts and stations produced and reported on a Community Safety Delivery Plan, in consultation with partners and stakeholders, to agree local targets for priorities within in each district. These plans are available to view in community fire stations and on each community fire station page on our website [www.merseyfire.gov.uk](http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk)

Performance is managed and reported on at all levels and in all functions, with staff working hard to reduce the number of emergency incidents that occur in Merseyside. The table illustrates the number of incidents attended by type, for an average day between 2006/07 and 2014/15. The table identifies that during 2014/15 38 incidents were attended on a daily basis against 87 during 2006/07. This reduction

provides evidence that working with local partners and MFRA’s own initiatives and campaigns has had a beneficial impact on the people and communities of Merseyside.

#### Average Count of Incidents attended per day

Incident Type	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Accidental Fires in the Home	3.8	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.3	3.3	3.1	3.2	2.9
Other Building and Property Fires	5.8	4.8	4.2	3.9	3.3	3.2	2.5	2.3	2.1
Vehicle Fires	5.4	4.2	3.7	3.3	2.6	2.2	2.0	1.8	1.9
All Antisocial Behaviour Fires	36.8	29.6	22.9	21.9	20.7	18.6	11.8	15.8	12.0
False Automatic Fire Alarms	14.7	15.0	16.6	16.3	16.2	15.3	12.5	7.5	7.7
Other False Alarms	9.9	8.7	7.4	6.8	5.7	5.0	4.7	4.5	4.4
Road Traffic Collisions	2.5	2.1	2.0	1.8	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.6
Other Special Services	7.8	6.6	6.0	5.5	5.9	5.3	5.3	5.6	5.6
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>86.7</b>	<b>74.5</b>	<b>66.3</b>	<b>63.1</b>	<b>59.2</b>	<b>54.2</b>	<b>43.0</b>	<b>42.0</b>	<b>38.2</b>

#### What others have said about our performance?

The National Resilience Assurance Team (NRAT) commented following completion of our self-assessments recently

***Organisationally MFRS continue to have clear and specifically structured management, information and training models for their NR assets. They exceed required standards in regards to their well-established USAR arrangements and have demonstrated robust forward planning for the HVP capability following the asset relocation and the subsequent movement of their trained personnel. They are able to provide extensive examples of National and regional deployment/exercises and are thorough in their recording of lessons identified and actions required.***

Mark Wolfe from Centre for Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI) stated post Exercise Dawn Vigil:

***Well done to all involved from Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service for their support and contribution to what has been a successful and enjoyable exercise. Exercises of this scale would not be possible without the dedication and commitment of such personnel and their professionalism and attitude throughout the event is invaluable in enabling us to achieve our objectives. The multi-agency planning team led by GM Kevin Longshaw and made up of personnel from various services and agencies; were professional and dedicated from start to finish.***

A Royal Navy Commodore commented in a letter following a visit to the TDA in July 2014:

Thank you so much for taking the time out of your busy day to host me at the Training and Development Academy. It was truly an eye-opening experience that I thoroughly enjoyed and indeed felt privileged to be taken around. I would be grateful if you could pass on my gratitude to Glen, Kim and John for imparting their knowledge and indeed their time. The show around the USAR equipment was great, you could spend all day trying the differing equipment, whilst John and the team's 'backdraft' demonstration was thought-provoking. We have come a long way with thermal imaging!

Although a little impromptu I particularly enjoyed meeting your trainees. I have to say they were an impressive bunch who brought great credit on the establishment. I wish them all the best for their future training.

COMAH (Control of Major Accident Hazard) Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Services Peer Review 2015, in the context of COMAH 2015 and the requirements of MFRA to ensure the requirements of this legislation are met, including exercising of Emergency Plans, commented:

*Exercise planning, delivery, evaluation and reporting is strong, and is linked to wider Local Resilience Forum exercising and training programme.*

*The current modular system gives strength and depth providing a rationale for the scope of each exercise and thereby demonstrating transparency. Each module has predetermined agency specific objectives which serve to reinforce the expectations of actions in a COMAH incident which by their nature require a coordinated multi-agency response.*

## **9. Financial Performance**

In accordance with the statutory requirement under the [Accounts and Audit \(England\) Regulations 2011](#) MFRA published a [Statement of Accounts 14/15](#) and [Annual Governance Statement 14/15](#) to illustrate that business is being conducted transparently and in accordance with the law and 'that public money is being properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively'. *Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999.*

### **Internal Audit**

The Authority procured its internal audit service under a service level agreement from Liverpool City Council and the arrangement and service was in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).

The Annual Review of Internal Audit Report concluded that:

***"It is our opinion that we can provide Substantial Assurance that the system of internal control in place at Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 accords with proper practice. The 2014/15 fundamental systems audits have shown a substantial level of compliance and none of the audits have identified weaknesses that have required a corporate impact assessment of Major or Moderate. Based on the audit work carried out in 2014/15 we are not aware of any significant control weaknesses within the service which impact on the Annual Governance Statement"***

## External Audit

External audit services are carried out by the Grant Thornton.

Grant Thornton's 2014/15 Audit Findings Report and Audit Report provided an unqualified opinion on the Authority's financial statements and value for money conclusion. These documents reflect the Auditor's findings and conclusions from auditing the Statement of Accounts.

The [Statement of Accounts 14/15](#), [Annual Governance Statement 14/15](#) and [Audit Finding Report 2014/15](#) are available on the MFRA website. The documents confirm the Authority's overall performance continues to be strong.

## Our budget for 2015/16

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority will have delivered £20.4 million of savings by March with further cuts of £5.2 million announced by Government for 2015/16 and 2016/17. This presents the Authority with significant challenges as it seeks to minimise the impact on the levels of service provided to the public. A summary of the budget challenges and plans for 2014/15 is available in both the [Service Delivery Plan 2015/16](#) , [IRMP 2013/16](#) and [IRMP Supplement 2015/17](#).

## Financial Management

The Authority produces a five year financial plan that takes into account Revenue, Capital, Reserves and Prudential Borrowing forecasts. In February 2015 the Budget for 2014/15 was agreed by the Authority a summary is available on the MFRA website [Budget Summary 2015-16](#)

## Our long term financial challenges and commitments

The Authority is seriously concerned about Government's future requirements to balance the books and the possible impacts on MFRA funding. The Authority have prepared a comprehensive plan to deliver these savings including merging and closing fire stations and further savings from support staff.

## 10. Our Future Plans

Our future plans are detailed in the [IRMP 2013/16](#), [IRMP Supplement 2015/17](#) and [Service Delivery Plan 2015/16](#) . We will be focused on delivering an excellent service to the residents and businesses of Merseyside with fewer resources, making more efficient use of resources we have. The planning process for the Service Delivery Plan and Community Safety Plans will begin in September 2015 and will include some challenging targets. The Authority have prepared a plan for further budget cuts of around £6.3m for the years 2015-17. It will be impossible to make these savings without impacting on service delivery and MFRA have undertaken consultation on proposed station mergers or closures with all stakeholders and residents of affected areas. Station mergers have been approved by the Authority subject to planning requirements being met, following extensive consultation, in Wirral and Knowsley with a third consultation planned in St Helens.

## Community Engagement & Communication

MFRA undertakes extensive consultation on all aspects of planning including the IRMP and changes to how we provide our services. All relevant [IRMP Supplement 2015/17](#) documentation is available in the Authority section - Authority Budget Committee on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2015.

We consult with our communities at independently facilitated public consultation events in the five districts. Principal Officers and management teams deliver briefings and consultation exercises with staff, representative bodies, Councillors, partners, stakeholders and Local Authority leaders. The [Corporate Communications Policy](#) (available on MFRA Portal) presents a co-ordinated approach to delivering information.

[Consultation](#) with stakeholders within the community is embedded within all aspects of planning in MF&RA with all relevant documentation available on the MFRA website and in the [IRMP 2013/16](#) and [IRMP Supplement 2015/17](#). During 2014/15 we undertook extensive consultations regarding the merger and closure of fire stations. During this process we host a wide variety of consultation and engagement forums including:

- Public consultation facilitated by an independent partner organisation – [ORS Consultation Report 2015](#)
- Staff consultation
- Local authority and strategic partner consultations
- Staff representative bodies (trade unions)
- Consultation on specific issues such as station closures.

**Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority wishes to continue to be provided with assurance in relation to its fire and rescue service including financial health, governance arrangements and service delivery performance. It will be necessary in 2015 to consult further with all interested parties and make difficult decisions around service delivery. However the communities of Merseyside can be assured of the Authority's absolute commitment to continuing to deliver the best service it possibly can.**

## Access to Information held by Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority

Government Legislation has been introduced to make public sector organisations more open and accountable to the public. There are primarily three key Acts of Parliament that have been put in place. These consist of:-

- The Data Protection Act 1998 which allows people to have access to their personal information that is held by the Authority.
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000, which broadens people's access to information that is held by public authorities, for example: reports, minutes of meetings etc.
- The Environmental Information Regulations which gives the public increased access to environmental information held by public authorities, for example: reports, readings, research findings etc.
- The Local Government Transparency Regulations 2014.

How to gain [Access to information](#) held by MFRA and details of how the legislation above governs what information can be released can be found on the MFRA website.

### Privacy Notice

We process information securely and follow the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998. We use secure methods when transferring the data and also apply appropriate retention periods. We also ensure that the data is disposed of securely when it is no longer required. The [Privacy Policy](#) can be found on the MFRA website.

### Authorisation

This Statement of Assurance is signed on behalf of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority as approved at the Authority meeting on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> December 2015.

Councillor Dave Hanratty.

Chair of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority

### Glossary of Terms

CFP	Community Fire Protection or Prevention
CIPFA	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
CMI	Chartered Management Institute
COMAH	Control of Major Accident Hazard
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DEFRA	Department for Environmental, Food and Rural Affairs
DIM	Detection, Identification and Monitoring
FBU	Fire Brigades Union
FOA	Fire Officers Association
FRA	Fire and Rescue Authority
HVP	High Volume Pump
INSARAG	International Search and Rescue Advisory Group
IOSH	Institute of Occupational Safety and Health
IRMP	Integrated Risk Management Plan
MACC	Mobilising and Communication Centre
MDD	Mass Decontamination Disrobe
MFRA	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
NEBOSH	National Examination Board of Safety
PSIAS	Public Sector Internal Audit Standards
SMA	Subject Matter Adviser
SOLACE	Society of Local Authority Chief Executives
UKISAR	UK International Search and Rescue Team
USAR	Urban Search and Rescue