

AGENDA ITEM:

REPORT TO:	MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY MEETING
DATE:	12TH MAY 2011
REPORT NO.	CFO/046/11
REPORTING OFFICER:	DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE & DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
CONTACT OFFICER:	AREA MANAGER PHIL GARRIGAN, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SAFETY – EXTN 4644
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	GROUP MANAGER MCCORMACK, EXTN 4605
SUBJECT:	FIRE BIKE PILOT

THERE ARE NO APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT

Purpose of Report

1. To request that Members note the contents of the report and the presentation on the outcome of the Fire Bikes six month pilot.

Recommendation

2. That Members note the success of the fire bike pilot and recognise their use independently (Stage 3) as part of the Service's small fire strategy.

Executive Summary

The fire bike pilot went live on 2nd August 2010 the purpose of the pilot was to gather data and information on the use of the bikes. The pilot was due to finish on 28th February 2011 however due to adverse weather conditions during December and January the motorbikes were unable to operate on several days; this has had an impact on the data collected. To ensure that the full potential of fire fighting motorbikes was assessed CLT agreed to extend the pilot by a further two months which concluded on 31st March 2011.

The bikes were available for a total of 54 occasions using part-time riders and attended 61 incidents during the pilot. The bike crews have attended and dealt successfully with a variety of incidents including rubbish in the open, wheelie bin fires, street furniture and grass fires. They have also provided a high profile presence at identified locations (Church Street, Grange Road Precinct and St Helens Shopping Centre) and attended a number of community events giving out leaflets and providing advice.

All documents regarding certification of the bike and PPE has been provided to the HSE and representative bodies as part of the normal consultation process which continues.

Introduction & Background

3. The pilot was detailed in Service Instruction 0622 and included three stages:

Stage one

- 3.1 Bike crews will respond with the small fires unit to calls to small fires. The bikes will extinguish the fire while the SFU adopts a covering role.

Stage two

- 3.2 The bikes will respond as a two appliance (fire bikes) response to small fires, bonfires and wheelie bins (not vehicles) as identified under the small fires strategy.

Stage three

- 3.3 The bikes will respond as a two appliance response to all small fires identified under the small fires strategy.

4. The pilot had been designed to be progressive and demonstrate the fire bikes' ability to deal with a wide range of incidents.

Identified Issues

5. Motorbike

- 5.1 The motorbike has performed well with the only issues being the storage of equipment on the bike. Due to the arrangements of the fire fighting equipment very little room is available to carry a radio or other equipment. Purpose made bags were supplied which allows equipment such as gloves, first aid kit, torches and paperwork can be carried. The BA set and fire fighting helmet carried for use during fire fighting operations was attached to the handles of the water tanks. Although this was not the purpose of the handles it did provide an effective solution and ensured rider comfort.

- 5.1.1 Work continues with the suppliers both to improve storage and improve the radio provision.

5.2 Fire fighting Equipment

The fire express fire fighting equipment has performed well and operated efficiently at all incidents. However the requirement to only ride the bike with the tanks empty or full to maintain stability is restrictive in so much that no matter how little water is used the tanks needed to be emptied therefore the bike was not available until it returned to station and replenished its water supply. This issue is due to the unrestricted movement of the water in each tank and the fact that system empties the tanks one side at a time rather than a balanced system taking water from both sides.

5.2.1 Work continues with the supplier to mitigate this issue.

5.3 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The clothing provided to the riders was the first of its kind and developed specifically for the fire bike project. For the first time in the World, the PPE satisfied both firefighting protection standards and motorbike rider standards. Although the PPE met all requirements it was identified early by both the suppliers (Universal Carbon Fibres) and MFRS that this version would require significant changes to ensure that it provided rider comfort. The main issue surrounded the weight of the clothing which was considered excessive; this was due to the material used for the lining. The manufacturers immediately started development of the second generation of the PPE which uses light weight material and provides additional comfort for the wearer; this second generation is now in final testing before going into manufacture. It should also be noted that the manufacturer of the kit is committed to improving the quality of the manufacture.

5.4 Other Issues

The pilot has provided reassurance that the bikes and riders have proved popular with local communities and attracted a lot of attention from young people. This engagement has been very positive and allowed strong fire safety measures to be delivered.

The pilot has also confirmed the limitations of the bikes both in terms of incidents requiring greater amounts of water (e.g. skips) and incidents some way from an access point (e.g. railway embankments). This allows MACC to make the appropriate mobilisation decision based on caller information.

Equality & Diversity Implications

6. The use of firefighting motorbikes on small anti-social fires is mainly in our most vulnerable communities where the need is greatest.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

7. The pilot has kept within the project budget.

Health & Safety and Environmental Implications

8. All riders will be trained blue light motorcycle response and appropriate risk assessments are in place.

Contribution to Achieving Our Purpose:

“To Make Merseyside a Safer, Stronger, Healthier Community”

9. By reducing road risk, enhancing the Service's small fires strategy and improving attendance times this initiative contributes to our Purpose.