

To Members of Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority

April 2011

Re Mobilising And Communications Centre (MACC) Review

We write as members of MACC to formally express our concerns regarding issues involving the MACC Review, currently undergoing the consultation process.

Our concerns are in the following areas:

Process Evolution Report

It would appear from reading the report compiled by Process Evolution, which we assume has been made available to you as the elected members of the Fire Authority and which the proposed cuts in the staffing levels in MACC are based on, that this report is fundamentally flawed.

The report bases its recommendations solely on the number of telephone calls handled by MACC. It does not take into account any of the other workload undertaken by MACC when, for example, dealing with an emergency incident, such as transmitting and receiving radio messages, updating incident logs, responding to requests for further assistance at an ongoing incident and ensuring that fire cover is maintained at all times in the Merseyside area etc. Those duties are just some of the large volume of workload undertaken by MACC that have not been considered by Process Evolution. By not taking this substantial workload into account, the report cannot accurately measure the current workload and propose a correct level of staffing.

The report also incorrectly states that a constant staffing level is maintained at all times, ignoring the part-time evening MACC staff employed after the last review in 2006, that ensure that additional staff are available during the perceived busiest times of the day.

Changes to Shifts

The recommended option for the shift pattern in MACC includes a twelve hour shift that starts at 1.00 pm in the afternoon and ends at 1.00 am the following morning. We do not see how such a shift pattern can be classed as 'family friendly', when in fact it is the total opposite. We also fail to understand how members of MACC who rely on public transport are expected to get home from work at that time.

During the last MACC review in 2006, similar shift changes were proposed. At the time the Fire Authority accepted that:

'Existing patterns (2-2-4 system) suit the work life balance needs of existing staff.

Start and finish times of proposed shifts are unrealistic in terms

of family commitments.

Staffs have built family commitments around existing shift arrangements.

In general the existing 2-2-4 shift pattern suits the majority of staffs who do not wish to take voluntary redundancy or early retirement.

A proposed afternoon shift conclusion time of midnight is both unrealistic and unsafe for staff who need to use public transport' (Report CFO/172/06, Para 7).

Having taken this view last time, we believe the same conclusions made then by the Fire Authority apply equally to the current proposals on shifts.

We would also point out with regard to the shifts in MACC that Fire Authority policy, by way of a collective agreement, states that 'There will be no imposed change to the 2-2-4 wholetime shift patterns (including start and finishing times)' (Principles of Agreement, Paragraph 3.6).

Equality Impact Assessment

We have been provided with a copy of an Equality Impact Assessment, which we again presume has been made available to you as members of the Fire Authority. This states regarding the proposed shifts:

'For both male and female staff who may have children, family commitments or have caring responsibilities the proposal will further support them in this aspect and allow greater flexibility for them to effectively manage their own time.'

We fail to see how a shift pattern that includes a shift that finishes in the early hours of the morning can support any aspect of the above statement.

We understand that consultation with staff should be an integral part of compiling an Equality Impact Assessment. At no point were we consulted regarding this Assessment. It is also clear that the previously expressed views of both MACC staff and the Fire Authority from 2006 have not been taken into account.

During the last review of MACC in 2006, a number of Fire Authority members visited MACC and spoke directly to the staff and listened to their concerns which, we believe at the time, was most helpful. We are of the firm belief that similar visits during this review would be of likewise mutual benefit and we would welcome an opportunity to speak to you directly as a member of the Fire Authority.

Yours sincerely,