

AGENDA ITEM:

REPORT TO:	MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY MEETING
DATE:	21ST JULY 2011
REPORT NO.	CFO/071/11
REPORTING OFFICER:	DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE & DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
CONTACT OFFICER:	AREA MANAGER MOTTRAM, DIRECTOR OF PERFORMANCE AND VALUES, EXTN. 4501
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	MIKE CUMMINS, CONSULTATION MANAGER
SUBJECT:	MACC REVIEW

APPENDIX A	TITLE:	PROCESS EVOLUTION REPORT
APPENDIX B	TITLE:	CFO/202/09
APPENDIX C	TITLE:	EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT
APPENDIX D	TITLE:	06TH MAY 2011 REQUEST FOR FBU POSITION STATEMENT
APPENDIX E	TITLE:	16TH JUNE 2011 REQUEST FBU POSITION STATEMENT
APPENDIX F	TITLE:	08TH JUNE 2011 FBU CORRESPONDENCE
APPENDIX G	TITLE:	14TH JUNE 2011 FBU LETTER PROCESS EVOLUTION
APPENDIX H	TITLE:	FOA POSITION STATEMENT CLOSE CONSULTATION
APPENDIX I	TITLE:	LETTER FROM MACC STAFF

ATTACHED –HARD COPIES

Outcomes

1. The implementation of a revised duty system for the Mobilising and Communication Centre (MACC) that will meet the performance standards expected by the public and the Authority and which will provide for a reduction in the number of established posts at MACC, thereby contributing to the budgetary saving targets set by the Authority at its meeting of the 17th February 2011.

Purpose of Report

2.
 - (a) To seek approval from Members for the implementation of the revised duty system for MACC recommended within this report.
 - (b) To agree a 12 week period of negotiation regarding any contractual issues that relate to this decision.

Recommendation

3.
 - (a) That Members approve the implementation of the revised duty system for MACC as detailed as option 2 in the attached report prepared by Process Evolution.
 - (b) That Members agree to a 12 week period of negotiation with the representative bodies and individual employees as appropriate.

Introduction & Background

4. This report deals with the future crewing arrangements for MACC. There has been serious interest from a significant number of staff regarding the Authority voluntary severance scheme. Whilst the report is cognisant of the interest in the North West in considering if a shared solution is practicable, Officers cannot deter from the seeking of the on-going efficiency savings demanded by the Authority.
5. The Authority considered a number of options in response to the Government grant cuts before finalising its budget on the 17th February 2011. That budget included additional savings to be found in a review of MACC crewing arrangements of £400k which allowed the Authority to freeze council tax. The Authority also approved a time-limited voluntary severance scheme for eligible staff and it is now clear that the attractive terms on offer have resulted in significant and serious interest from large numbers of MACC staff.
6. A twelve week consultation period ending 3rd June 2011 was conducted with representative bodies regarding the proposed crewing arrangements for MACC following the Authority budget decisions of the 17th February 2011 and the outcome of this exercise is detailed in this report. However it is acknowledged by the Service that, should the Authority approve the proposal, a suitable period of negotiations should now take place in order to seek an agreement that is acceptable to representative bodies and individuals alike.
7. To meet staff expectations regarding severance and to meet the requirements to reduce posts and meet the budget challenge, a new crewing system for MACC is required. Any new system must meet the Authority and public expectations with regard to performance, be a system that maintains the health and welfare of staff and be reasonably attractive to remaining and future MACC employees.

8. In support of the recommendation in this report, the attached document (Appendix A) was commissioned from Process Evolution to consider staffing levels at MACC. The report takes into account emergency call volumes, other telephone calls and other non-emergency work at MACC and makes recommendations for cost effective crewing models. The evaluation offered 3 options with 2 reducing staff numbers from 40 to 32 and one to a staff number of 30. The '32' solutions can also be run on a self rostering basis. The options provide a basis for efficiencies equal to 9 whole time posts. An additional saving will be made by the reduction of one management post whose responsibilities have been included in the role of Station Locality Manager.
9. The Authority had previously instructed the Chief Fire Officer (CFO/202/09 attached as Appendix B) to review staffing arrangements in MACC with a view to reducing staff. However, a degree of 'change paralysis' was created by the now failed national control project.
10. The Authority might consider doing nothing pending discussions on a new regional solution but this would be to the detriment of staff wishing to leave and also not deliver reductions in staff levels in line with the Authority's budget to find savings of up to £400k in the MACC budget. There is also a possibility that the Authority would benefit from CLG 'subsidy' of redundancies that may be available for a regional solution but might also be available if changes were to be made in staffing levels at this time. It is unlikely that any alternative regional option would be fully functional before 2014.

If the Authority chooses not to continue with this option or wait for any regional option it would need to identify how it intends to balance its budget.

Results of Consultation

11. A twelve week consultation period has taken place with the Fire Officers Association (FOA), the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and individual employees of MACC in relation to this matter.

FBU

12. Detailed and extensive consultation has taken place with the FBU over the past 12 weeks. The Service has responded to further FBU concerns and has amended the equality impact assessment with the object of addressing these concerns.

13. Although the Authority agreed for a period of consultation in relation to the MACC review, the FBU has taken the position that any proposal regarding a revised duty system is a matter for negotiation as opposed to consultation and have also requested that the matter be referred to the Consultation & Negotiation Committee to support the deliberations of the parties. The employers Joint Secretary has indicated that he is prepared to consider a joint referral when the FBU clarifies those matters which remain the subject of disagreement or require further clarification. This would be considered during the negotiations that would follow an Authority discussion to implement the recommendation.
14. The service wrote to the FBU on the 8th and 16th June 2011 (Appendices D and E) requesting a written position statement at the conclusion of the consultation process to identify all those issues which remain the subject of disagreement. Letters from the FBU dated 8th and 14th June 2011 (Appendices F and G) effectively capture the current FBU position. The additional questions raised by the FBU in relation to the Process Evolution report have been put directly to Process Evolution for a formal response and the other matters will be dealt with in correspondence and future face to face meetings.
15. The FBU has not been able to agree, to agree to the proposal for a revised duty system within the timescale of the 12 week consultation exercise.

FOA

16. Unfortunately FOA were unable to attend a consultation meeting until the 6th June 2011, although the formal consultation period ended on the 3rd June 2011. They wrote to the lead officer on the 13th June 2011 and have raised a number of issues in relation to the robustness of the report generated by Process Evolution. These may have arisen from a misunderstanding of the analysis of the data presented in the Process Evolution report and the issues generated have been dealt with in correspondence. A “wash up” meeting will be arranged with FOA to address any residual concerns. The FOA ‘end of consultation’ position statement is attached as Appendix H to this report.

Individual Employees

17. The Deputy Chief Executive & Deputy Chief Fire Officer wrote to all MACC employees at the commencement of the consultation process on the 10th March 2011 offering to meet any individuals to discuss the MACC proposals and a number of subsequent meetings took place with individual employees which allowed their concerns to be aired and revealed a significant interest in the offer of voluntary severance.
18. In addition, the majority of staff co-signed a letter to the Authority (Appendix I) spelling out their concerns. This was the pivotal factor in withdrawing 2 of the 3 potential options in recognition of ‘family friendly’ issues.

Equality & Diversity Implications

19. The revised shift proposals allow flexibility for the remaining staff so they can provide an acceptable balance between work and home. The proposals would allow a number of mainly older staff to take advantage of the attractive voluntary severance terms being offered by the Authority. A full equality impact assessment of the 3 options detailed in the Process Evolution report has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix C to this report.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

20. The proposals, when taken with the deletion of a senior management post would meet the £400k budget saving target set by the Authority. There are 'up front' costs associated with voluntary severance and voluntary early retirement but these will follow the Authority's policy on an enhanced voluntary severance arrangement and each individual will be considered with its own business case. If there is financial support from CLG to meet severance costs then this will clearly enhance individual cases but in any event costs will be confined within the budget agreed for voluntary severance and voluntary early retirement.

Health & Safety and Environmental Implications

21. The implementation of option 2, as detailed in the Process Evolution report will ensure that the Authority meets its published performance expectations, whilst maintaining a safe healthy working environment for remaining and future employees.

Contribution to Achieving Our Purpose:

"To Make Merseyside a Safer, Stronger, Healthier Community"

22. The proposal allows the Authority to meet the savings for MACC agreed at the budget meeting of the 17th February 2011 whilst ensuring a high level of service to the local community and providing the opportunity for staff wishing to leave the employment of the Service to do so on favourable terms.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None