

AGENDA ITEM:

REPORT TO:	MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY MEETING
DATE:	21ST JULY 2011
REPORT NO.	CFO/073/11
REPORTING OFFICER:	ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
CONTACT OFFICER:	AREA MANAGER BRODERICK, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONAL PREPAREDNESS, EXT 4315
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	STATION MANAGER SEARLE
SUBJECT:	REVISED CREWING SYSTEM FOR THE MARINE RESCUE TEAM

APPENDIX A	TITLE:	CORRESPONDANCE WITH JLA
APPENDIX B	TITLE:	MRT MOBILISATION ANALYSIS
APPENDIX C	TITLE:	MRT PROPOSED DUTY SYSTEM
APPENDIX D	TITLE:	3RD JUNE 11 SERVICE LETTER TO FBU
APPENDIX E	TITLE:	8TH JUNE 11 SERVICE LETTER TO FBU
APPENDIX F	TITLE:	16TH JUNE 11 SERVICE LETTER TO FBU
APPENDIX G	TITLE:	15TH JUNE 11 FBU LETTER TO SERVICE
APPENDIX H	TITLE:	BUNDLE MP LETTERS & RESPONSES
APPENDIX I	TITLE:	MRT EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT
APPENDIX J	TITLE:	MRT RISK ASSESSMENT
APPENDIX K	TITLE:	FBU POSITION STATEMENT

ATTACHED – HARD COPIES

Outcomes

1. The implementation of the revised crewing system recommended in this report will ensure the maintenance of an immediate rescue response by the Authority to incidents occurring on the River Mersey whilst at the same time delivering the Authority's budget saving target for the Marine Rescue Team (MRT) of £100k.

Purpose of Report

2. To seek approval from Members for the implementation in principle of the duty system for the MRT recommended within this report and for Members to instruct Officers to enter into negotiation over a 12 week period with the representative bodies and individual employees as appropriate with a view to reaching agreement over terms and conditions.

Recommendation

3. That, Members:

- (a) Approve the implementation in principle of the duty system for the MRT recommended within this report.
- (b) Instruct Officers to enter into negotiation with the representative bodies and individual employees as appropriate with a view to reaching agreement over terms and conditions.

Introduction & Background

4. In June 2005 Members took the decision to provide an enhanced rescue response to the River Mersey by integrating the River Mersey Inshore Rescue Service into the Authority. As a result the employees of the River Mersey Inshore Rescue Service transferred into Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (MFRA). This decision was taken primarily to ensure the longevity of this much valued service which is considered to be an important emergency response asset for much of the strategic transport links into the city.
5. At the time of transfer Merseyside Police, Liverpool City Council, Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council, Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council, Halton Borough Council, Merseytravel and Liverpool Airport all undertook to continue to contribute towards the funding of the MRT. The external funding income for the MRT for the financial year 2006/07 is detailed in the table below:

Body	Actual funding 2006/07
Liverpool City Council	£100,000
Halton Borough Council	£10,000
Merseyside Police	£21,104
Merseytravel	£35,000
Wirral MBC	£10,000
Sefton MBC	£10,000
John Lennon Airport	£35,000
Total	£221,104

6. Since that time, Merseyside Police, Halton Borough Council and in April of this year Liverpool City Council have withdrawn funding. The current external funding income for the MRT detailing a £116,104 reduction is shown in the table below:

Body	Agreed Funding 2011/12	Date Funding Terminates
Merseytravel	£40,000	March 2013
Wirral MBC	£15,000	March 2013
Sefton MBC	£10,000	March 2013
John Lennon Airport	£40,000	March 2013
Total	£105,000	

7. Officers have made contact with Liverpool Airport to request that they consider increasing their contributions. Copies of this correspondence are attached at Appendix A. It is not considered a realistic prospect that Sefton or Wirral will increase their contributions; rather the objective for Officers will be to seek for both Authorities to maintain the existing level of contribution. Members will be aware that Merseytravel are already subsidising the MRT accommodation on the new Pier Head landing stage therefore it would not be appropriate to seek an increase in contribution from Merseytravel given the extensive support they have already given to the Authority in respect of the MRT.

Mobilisation Profile

8. The Knowledge and Information Management (KIM) Department were tasked to undertake an analysis of mobilisation for the MRT. The period from 1st April 2008 to 31st January 2011 was chosen for analysis for reasons of data consistency. The Incident Recording System (IRS) was introduced on 1st April 2008. Prior to this time the recording system in use within the Service was the Vision BOSS mobilising system which captured limited information for the purposes of analysis. The full analysis of mobilisation data undertaken by KIM is provided at Appendix B.
9. The MRT have averaged a total of 69 incident responses per year over the period 1st April 2008 – 31st January 2011. The timing and distribution of these mobilisations can be accurately predicted across the year. Self evidently this is a very low level of operational response.
10. The analysis of activity shows two discernable peaks between 1100hrs and 1200hrs and 1600hrs and 1700hrs. Overall the greatest likelihood of a mobilisation occurs between 0800hrs and 2200hrs each day.
11. The likelihood of a mobilisation outside of these hours is very low, occurring on average once every 17 days (2000hrs – 0800hrs). The average time deployed is one hour.

Savings Options

12. There are a number of options open to Members by which to make savings from the MRT budget however with the exception of the option recommended by Officers all would lead to a delayed emergency response. These options are summarised as follows.

Provide day time crewing only and have the Search and Rescue Team respond to crew the rescue boat between 2000hrs and 0800hrs

13. Under this option the MRT would operate the existing day duty system to provide 12 hours of Wholetime response cover between 0800hrs and 2000hrs. Outside of these hours the Search and Rescue Team would mobilise to the pontoon on the Croxteth fire appliance to deploy the rescue boat upon notification of an incident. Whilst substantial savings would be achievable through the implementation of this system it would be likely to result in compulsory redundancies and would incur at least a 10 minute delay in responding between 2000hrs and 0800hrs.

Provide day time crewing only and cede responsibility for response to the RNLI at New Brighton between 2000hrs and 0800hrs

14. Under this option the MRT would operate the existing day duty system to provide 12 hours of Wholetime response cover between 0800hrs and 2000hrs. Outside of these hours rescue response cover for the River Mersey would be ceded to the RNLI New Brighton Inshore Life Boat. Whilst substantial savings would be achievable through the implementation of this system it would be likely to result in compulsory redundancies and would result in at least a 10 minute delay in responding between 2000hrs and 0800hrs (Source: Search and Rescue Framework for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Chapter 4 RNLI, Section 4.4. Strategic Performance Standards p. 48).

Cede all responsibility for rescue on the River Mersey to the RNLI at New Brighton

15. Under this option the MRT would be disbanded and the responsibility for rescue response on the River Mersey would be ceded to the RNLI at New Brighton. Implementation of this approach would inevitably result in compulsory redundancies and would result in at least a 10 minute delay in responding to incidents at all times.

Recommended Duty System

16. In light of the mobilisation analysis the recommended duty system would provide for a 12 hour core response shift between 0800hrs and 2000hrs and a sleeping in shift (duty) between 2000hrs and 0800hrs.
17. The core response shift would mirror the day shift currently worked by the MRT and would integrate the existing work routine.

18. The sleeping in shift would comply with the terms and conditions applicable to existing Green Book sleeping in duty arrangements which are copied in full below from the National Joint Council for Local Government Services National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service (Section 2 Working Arrangements, 2.6 (e) Sleeping in duty). Personnel would be required to respond immediately to emergency incidents from the high quality accommodation provided by the Authority during the sleeping in shift.

Sleeping in duty

Employees required to sleep on the premises shall receive an allowance as set out on the card inside the back cover. This allowance covers the requirement to sleep in and up to 30 minutes call out per night, after which the additional hours provision will apply.

19. Members should note that the new River Mersey Rescue Station located on the Merseytravel pontoon will be provided with high quality en suite sleeping accommodation from which the sleeping in duty will be undertaken. It may be necessary for employees to opt out from the Working Time Directive when undertaking this shift system however this will be covered by the same derogation arrangements in use by other employees of the Authority. The shift availability calculations underpinning this duty system are provided at Appendix C.
20. Implementation of this duty system would see a reduction from 15 to 8 staff. At the time of writing there are 14 substantive posts filled within the MRT with 3 MRT members having applied for Voluntary Early Retirement/Severance. Subject to Member approval an internal selection process will be undertaken to fill the 8 remaining posts.
21. It is considered by Officers that compulsory redundancies as a result of the implementation of the revised crewing system may be avoided by a combination of redeployment and the pursuit of commercial income generation opportunities.

Consultation process

22. A period of consultation over the implementation of this duty system was opened with representative bodies and staff on 6th March 2011 and concluded on 6th June 2011. Face to face meetings have taken place and the FBU has been furnished with all the information that has been requested from the Service prior to the close of consultation on the 6th June. The Service wrote to the FBU on the 3rd June 2011 dealing with all outstanding matters raised by the FBU in previous meetings and correspondence and stating the position that the Service was of the view that all these matters had been dealt with prior to the conclusion of consultation (Appendix D).

23. The Service wrote to the FBU on the 8th (Appendix E) and then again on the 16th June 2011 (Appendix F) requesting that the FBU provide, in accordance with the agreed consultation procedures, a position statement in order that the FBU view on the progress/outcome of consultation could be fully reported to Members. On 15th June (9-days after the close of formal consultation) the Service did receive a response to its letter of the 3rd June 2011 (Appendix G) in which the FBU has raised a further series of questions and requests for information. These additional matters will now be dealt with in correspondence prior to this report being considered by Members. The FBU have also sent a position statement on 1st July 2011 attached as Appendix K. This may prove of help in any subsequent negotiations.
24. Although the Authority agreed for a period of consultation in relation to the proposal to modify the crewing arrangements for the MRT, the FBU has taken the position that any proposal regarding a revised duty system is a matter for negotiation as opposed to consultation. It is acknowledged by the Service that subject to the approval by Members of the recommendations contained within this report, a suitable period of negotiation should now take place in order to seek an agreement that is acceptable to representative bodies and individuals.
25. Members of the MRT have written to local MPs including Louise Ellman, George Howarth, Bill Esterson and Dave Watts expressing concerns over the proposals for a revised duty system. This has resulted in a series of letters addressed to the Chief Fire Officer requesting confirmation that the service provided by the MRT is not at risk. Principal Officers have been able to assure local MPs that the duty system recommended by the Service will maintain the high level of response capability currently provided, whilst allowing for the saving of the £100k per annum required by the Authority in order to meet its budget. The bundle of documents received and the relevant responses are attached to this report as Appendix H.

Next steps

26. Should Members approve the recommendations contained within this report then Officers will commence a period of negotiation with the representative bodies and individual members of the MRT as appropriate with a view to reaching agreement over terms and conditions.

Equality & Diversity Implications

27. A full equality impact assessment on the duty system recommended in this report has been undertaken and is attached at Appendix I.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

28. Implementation of the duty system recommended within this report will achieve the £100k savings target for the MRT assumed within the Authority budget.

Health & Safety and Environmental Implications

29. A detailed risk assessment relating to the implementation of the duty system recommended within this report is attached at Appendix J.

Contribution to Achieving Our Purpose:

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

30. By implementing the duty system recommended within this report the Authority can ensure a high quality River Rescue service continues to be delivered within an envelope of financial affordability.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None