

AGENDA ITEM:

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| REPORT TO: | MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY MEETING |
| DATE: | 24TH JUNE 2010 |
| REPORT NO. | CFO/109/10 |
| REPORTING OFFICER: | ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE & ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER |
| CONTACT OFFICER: | AREA MANAGER STEPHENS, EXT 4315 |
| OFFICERS CONSULTED: | GARRY WILLIAMS |
| SUBJECT: | HSE INSPECTION JUNE 2010 |

APPENDIX A TITLE: HSE INSPECTION TIMETABLE

ATTACHED – HARD COPY

Purpose of Report

1. Firefighter safety has been significantly enhanced on Merseyside by the development of comprehensive Standard Operational Procedures (SOP's) underpinned by Generic Risk Assessments (GRA's), the provision of state of the art appliances and equipment and exposure to significant amounts of high quality realistic training. This has been possible by utilising the excellent facilities at the Training and Development Academy (TDA) and at other risk assessed locations throughout the County. By way of example in 2009/10 Firefighter injuries were reduced by 6.7%.
2. The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the intention of the Health & Safety Inspectorate (HSE) to conduct a management intervention (pre-emptive inspection) of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS).

Recommendation

3. That Members note the content of this report.

Introduction & Background

4. In March 2010, following a period of dialogue between the Service and the HSE, a meeting took place involving the HSE Principle Health and Safety Inspector, the HSE local Health and Safety Inspector, the ACFO, the Director of Safety Culture and Compliance, the Health and Safety Manager, the FBU Brigade Secretary and the FBU Health and Safety representatives.

5. At this meeting the Service were advised that the HSE had on a number of previous occasions been approached by the FBU who had raised issues relating to Health and Safety matters. These approaches were made at the same time as a number of none Health and Safety related issues had been disputed through the recognised industrial relations mechanisms. The HSE made it clear at the meeting that they have no intention of being drawn into any industrial dispute concerning the Fire and Rescue Service or indeed any other organisation.
6. The HSE did feel however that given the number of such allegations received by the HSE, it might be prudent to make a management intervention in the form of a pre-emptive inspection of the Service in order to allay any concerns that had been raised. This proposal was welcomed by the Officers in attendance as it was considered to represent an opportunity to demonstrate the comprehensive commitment to Health and Safety continually demonstrated by Members and Officers alike.
7. The Health and Safety Manager has since agreed a timetable for the HSE intervention with the local HSE Inspector, which is scheduled to commence on 28th June. A copy of the schedule is provided for the information of Members at Appendix A.
8. The HSE have also advised the Service of two further allegations made by the FBU on 22nd April (in relation to crewing levels) and 13th May (in relation to the working of excessive hours). With regards to the allegation of the working of excessive hours the HSE have advised the FBU that they should discuss this matter with the Service. With regards to the allegation in respect of crewing levels the HSE have stated that:

‘these are primarily an issue around standards of fire cover. There will be a range of views on whether or not changes to crewing levels would amount to a measure that substantially affects the health and safety of employees. Only the courts can decide whether that is the case and the HSE have no plans to elevate the issue to one that we put before a court’.

Equality & Diversity Implications

9. None contained within this report.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

10. None contained within this report.

Health & Safety and Environmental Implications

11. The Authority is absolutely committed to the embedding of a safety culture within the organisation. The inspection by the HSE represents an opportunity to demonstrate the extent of this commitment.

Contribution to Achieving the Vision:

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

12. The absolute commitment of the Authority to the health, safety and welfare of all employees contributes significantly to the safe and effective operational response delivered by the Service.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix A HSE inspection timetable