

AGENDA ITEM:

REPORT TO:	MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY
DATE:	29th NOVEMBER 2011
REPORT NO.	CFO/140/11
REPORTING OFFICER:	DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
CONTACT OFFICER:	DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC PLANNING, DEB APPLETON, EXT 4402
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	
SUBJECT:	RESOURCE INTENSIVE & VEXATIOUS CUSTOMER POLICY AND SERVICE INSTRUCTION

APPENDIX (A)	TITLE	Resource Intensive & Vexatious Customer Policy
(B)		Resource Intensive & Vexatious Customer Service Instruction
(C)		Equality Impact assessment – Resource Intensive and Vexatious Customer Framework

ATTACHED –HARD COPY

Purpose of Report

1. To request that Members approve the recommendations of this report relating to the Resource Intensive and Vexatious Customer Policy and Service Instruction.

Recommendation

2. That Members;
 - a) Approve the Resource Intensive and Vexatious Customer Policy and Service Instruction.

Introduction & Background

Please note that were this report refers to the term customer it is used to describe an individual, a group of individuals or an organisation.

3. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service is committed to providing good quality, value for money services to our service users and customers in an efficient and courteous way. We want to make sure that we manage our services and resources in an equitable way. The Resource Intensive & Vexatious Customer Policy and Service Instruction will help to do this by providing effective management of customer contact which is disproportionate to the issues raised or compared to that of other customers. A small number of individuals and organisations create a volume of work for staff that is out of proportion to the initial issue or complaint and it is important that staff time is used effectively and productively whilst still striving to provide excellent levels of service.
4. We accept that some customers may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to them contacting us. This Policy and Service Instruction aim to distinguish between this type of behaviour and behaviour which is aggressive, places unreasonable demands on us, is vexatious, or where contact is persistent.
5. The Policy is attached at appendix A and Service Instruction at Appendix B. When deciding if a customer is to be managed under this Policy & Service Instruction we will use all information that we have to help assist us in making the decision. Evidence rather than anecdotal information will form the basis of the decision to manage a customer under the policy. Only when all avenues and options have been exhausted should we consider the customer under this policy. For example, all complaints must be registered with Professional Standards and dealt with through their processes before this policy is used.

Equality & Diversity Implications

6. The Policy and Service Instruction have been equality impact assessed (appendix C) and it is considered that this approach provides consistency and reduces the risk of dealing with people in an unequal way. Any potential negative impact has been identified and addressed within the document to avoid this occurring.
7. Furthermore as the use of this procedure can only be authorised by a Director or Area Manager and it's use evidence based, we do not think that any customer will receive less favourable treatment because of any of the protected characteristics.

Staff Implications

8. If approved, the policy and service instruction will assist in staff using their time most effectively.

Legal Implications

9. The Freedom of Information (FoI) Act deals with the issue of vexatious FoI requests and this is specifically referred to in a separate section within the Service Instruction to ensure that staff are clear about the potential implications.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

10. There are no financial implications arising from this report. The implementation of the Policy and Service instruction will help to reduce unproductive work.

Risk Management, Health & Safety and Environmental Implications

11. There are no health and safety or environmental implications arising from this report.

Contribution to Achieving our Purpose

**“To Achieve Safer Stronger Communities - Safe Effective Firefighters”

** Currently part of the IRMP 2012-2015 Consultation

12. It is important that staff focus on core business and this includes dealing sympathetically and effectively with customers who have a genuine issue with the Service. This Policy and Service Instruction will help staff differentiate between those customers and ones who take up a disproportionate amount of staff time.

Glossary of Terms

Customer - the term customer is used to describe an individual, a group of Individuals or an organisation.