

**AGENDA ITEM:**

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>MERSEYSIDE FIRE &amp; RESCUE AUTHORITY</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>17<sup>th</sup> May 2012</b>
<b>REPORT NO.</b>	<b>CFO/083/12</b>
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	<b>Deputy Chief Fire Officer Phil Garrigan</b>
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>Area Manager Myles Platt</b>
<b>OFFICERS CONSULTED:</b>	<b>Community Safety Manager Kevin Johnson</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Home Fire Safety Delivery Strategy 2012</b>

**APPENDIX A                      TITLE                      Equality Impact Assessment**

**ATTACHED: HARD COPY**

Purpose of Report

1. To request that Members consider the recommendations of this report relating to the strategic delivery of Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSC) within Merseyside.

Recommendation

2. That Members;
  - (a) Note the contents of this report.
  - (b) Approve a period of consultation with the public in relation to the revised HFSC strategy and provision of smoke detectors during HFSC revisits on a not for profit cost recovery basis for members of the community assessed as low risk.
  - (c) Agree to pilot the revised HFSC delivery strategy between 1<sup>st</sup> July 2012 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013.

Introduction & Background

3. Since 1999, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority (MFRA) has proactively promoted fire safety in the home by conducting over 790,000 free Home Fire Safety Checks, resulting in a 44% reduction in accidental dwelling fires during this period. More importantly, there has been a 67% reduction in the number of people killed and 28% reduction in the number of people injured through fire in the home.

4. Whilst the HFSC strategy has contributed to the reduction in accidental dwelling fires, deaths and injuries, statistics show that these reductions have begun to plateau over recent years.
5. Additionally, due to the budget challenges faced by MFRA from 2012-2015, our ability to provide Home Fire Safety Checks which include the provision of free smoke alarms to all residents of Merseyside will be difficult to sustain in the medium to long term.
6. This position was recognised by Members during the budget setting process and was reflected within the budget resolution of the 16<sup>th</sup> February 2012, which included the requirement on the CFO to review the current HFSC strategy with a view that the investment offers the best return for community safety.
7. In response to the budget resolution CFO/045/12 was submitted to MFRA Community Safety Scrutiny Panel suggesting the formulation of a Project Board to review the strategic direction and delivery methods pertaining to Home Fire Safety Checks.
8. The main objectives of the Project Board were:
  - a) To target MFRA resources more effectively to ensure that the focus is on the most vulnerable in the community.
  - b) To reduce the capital burden of £685,000 incurred by the provision of free smoke detectors.
  - c) To deliver the installation of smoke detectors for low risk clients during HFSC revisits on a cost recovery basis over an agreed period of time, thus reducing the revenue for provision of services from Fire Service Direct (FSD) and Fire Support Network (FSN).
  - d) To maintain a free fire safety advisory service for all in the community.
9. In order to continue to drive down accidental dwelling fires, MFRA must concentrate its resources on those most at risk in order to implement preventative measures and interventions at the earliest opportunity, as is detailed in the District and Station plans for 2012/13.
10. There are approximately 626,000 properties in Merseyside recorded on the Goldmine database, with 258,000 considered low risk, 262,000 medium risk and 106,000 high risk.
11. There are currently 68,500 5 year low risk revisits overdue, with 351,000 low risk revisits required from 2012 - 2017. The revisit strategy is clearly unsustainable in its current form and therefore it is recommended that Members agree to pilot the cessation of the provision of free smoke detectors for low risk individuals in Merseyside who have previously received this service with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2012.

12. MFRS will continue to offer free Home Fire Safety Checks and smoke detectors to vulnerable medium and high risk individuals across Merseyside.
13. It is recognised that the removal of the free Home Fire Safety Check visits to low risk individuals would create a gap in provision and it is therefore recommended that Members agree to piloting an alternative delivery method from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2012 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 whereby the provision of smoke detectors and their installation are offered to low risk individuals using a not for profit cost recovery model, in which service delivery would be commissioned through Fire Service Direct.
14. Low risk individuals will be defined as community members who have previously received a HFSC visit by MFRA staff and were considered low risk at point of contact.
15. When these individuals are due a revisit, they will be subject to a telephone risk assessment to ascertain if there have been any significant changes in their circumstances that would affect their risk rating. This process will clarify whether individuals receive a HFSC and the provision of free smoke detectors or are offered smoke detectors on a non profit cost recovery basis.
16. Under Section 6 of the Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004, MFRA will continue to offer the free provision of fire safety advice to all members of the community in Merseyside.
17. This approach reflects the budget resolution proposed and agreed at the Fire Authority meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> February 2012, which included the requirement on the CFO to review the current HFSC strategy with a view that the investment offers the best return for community safety.
18. MFRA are required to consult over this planned change to HFSC delivery. Subject to Member approval the intention is to use the IRMP consultation events 12<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> May, in each of the five districts and to supplement this by publishing the planned changes on the website and inviting comments and views. The pilot will also be used to gather information on the planned change to inform the final decision by Members.

#### Equality & Diversity Implications

19. An Equality Impact Assessment has been submitted at Appendix A which concludes that the majority of HFSC visits are, and will continue to be, conducted in high/medium risk areas.

#### Staff Implications

20. The pilot will not change the terms and conditions of service for MFRA staff, however funding provided for FSN will be utilised to enhance the call centre capability on a fixed term basis.
21. The Community Safety Manager and Fire Support Network will move from HQ site to the Vestey Road building under the FSD brand. .

### Legal Implications

22. The provision of free Home Fire Safety Checks is not a statutory duty however section 6 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires that the Authority provide free fire safety advice and to promote fire safety in its area. Paragraph 12 above outlines that the Authority will continue to perform its statutory duty.
23. The proposal involves charging for smoke alarms on a not for profit cost recovery basis. Section 18A(3) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 provides that before a fire and rescue authority begins to charge it must consult any persons the Authority considers appropriate. Paragraph 18 above outlines the proposed consultation which will discharge this statutory duty.
24. The service level agreement with FSN is to be redrafted and updated to reflect the arrangements during the pilot period.

### Financial Implications & Value for Money

25. The provision of a Home Fire Safety Check would be provided at cost plus an additional charge for each smoke detector supplied to include associated costs such as staffing, insurance, fuel and vehicles.
26. The proposed pilot is based upon an actual cost recovery only and is aimed at reducing the capital burden for the provision of smoke detectors and the annual revenue costs for Fire Support Network and Fire Service Direct respectively.
27. MFRA will be responsible for financial management of the HFSC delivery service and FSN will be commissioned through a refresh of the SLA.

### Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

28. MFRS will target its resources to focus on those members of the community who are most vulnerable. The level of intervention will be proportionate to the risks identified.
29. The proposal ensures that provision is being made for the maintenance of levels of smoke alarm ownership in properties assessed as low risk.

### Contribution to Our Mission – To Achieve;

“Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Firefighters”

30. By reducing risk in people’s homes in Merseyside, making a positive difference to our communities and providing an excellent and affordable service.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

CFO/045/12

## \*Glossary of Terms

HFSC	-	Home Fire Safety Check
MFRA	-	Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority
MFRS	-	Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service
CFO	-	Chief Fire Officer
IRMP	-	Integrated Risk Management Plan
FSD	-	Fire Service Direct
FSN	-	Fire Support Network
SLA	-	Service Level Agreement