

AGENDA ITEM:

<b>BRIEFING NOTE TO:</b>	<b>MERSEYSIDE FIRE &amp; RESCUE AUTHORITY</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2012</b>
<b>REPORT NO.</b>	<b>CFO/164/12</b>
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	<b>CHIEF FIRE OFFICER</b>
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>AREA MANAGER SEARLE</b>
<b>OFFICERS CONSULTED:</b>	<b>STATION MANAGER LAWLESS</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>STAFFING SITUATION AT THE MARINE RESCUE UNIT</b>

Purpose of Report

1. To advise Members of the measures being taken to address the current staffing issues at the Marine Rescue Unit (MRU).

Recommendation

2. That Members note the measures being taken to address the current staffing issues at the MRU.

Introduction & Background

3. The restructure of the MRU in April 2012 resulted in a staffing level of 8. This provides for a distribution of 5 Crew and 3 Team Leaders with a minimum crewing level of 3 at all times (1 Team Leader and 2 Crew).
4. As per the MRU Collective agreement, each 24 hour shift worked is divided into two elements which are a 12 hour day shift (commencing at 0800hrs) immediately followed by a 12 hour sleeping in period.
5. MRT personnel are conditioned to green book terms. Crew are paid at Grade 6 and Team Leaders are paid at Grade 8. All personnel receive the green book sleeping in allowance plus one hours pay at the relevant grade.
6. At present there are 3 members of staff absent, either through a long term injury or sickness. This is creating pressures on staffing levels and has resulted

in the boat being unavailable on numerous occasions over recent weeks. As the absence is projected to be long term, the following measures have been put in place to maximise the availability of the boat.

- 2 crew members have been assessed as competent to act up to Team Leader
  - A crew member who was unsuccessful during the MRU re structure and subsequently offered a post within Operational Equipment, has been asked if he will be available to provide cover
  - Voluntary additional hours have been offered to MRU crew members and also the SRT as they have received suitable awareness training and hold the relevant qualifications for the post. The rate of pay for the addition hours is Grade 6 for Crew and at Grade 8 for the Team Leaders irrespective of substantive role or conditions of service
  - Crew members are maximising availability through self rostering assisted by Time and Resource Management (TRM)
- 7 Additional shifts are not being offered to operational crews due to their lack of awareness of the River and because of the qualifications/training required to crew the boat. If additional shifts were offered to operational personnel, the interested individuals would be recompensed as per the MRU rates of pay specified at paragraph 6 above. It is not considered likely therefore that there would be any take up of additional shifts from operational personnel as they would be effectively covering a 24 hour shift for 13 hours pay on green book Scale 6 or 8 rates.
8. Even with the above measures in place, the projected staffing levels for the MRU are regularly falling below what is required to provide the full 24 hour, 7 day response resulting in the availability of the boat being limited to approximately five 24 hour periods per week. A review of demand/utilisation of the MRU has been undertaken and demonstrates that the busiest periods for the MRU fall between Thursdays through to Sundays. TRM will as far as practicable ensure that the MRU is staffed for these busier periods.

#### Equality & Diversity Implications

9. None contained within this report.

#### Staff Implications

10. MRU Staff members have been requested to use self rostering as advantageously as possible to maximise availability and to prevent lone working situations arising.

#### Legal Implications

11. The Authority has the legal power to provide a rescue service for the River Mersey by virtue of Section 11 of the Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004 however it does not have a statutory duty to do so. The Authority will not therefore be in breach of its statutory duties if the boat is unavailable.

12. The Authority has an agreement with Liverpool Airport, Merseytravel and Sefton and Wirral Metropolitan Borough Councils to provide river rescue services. Arrangements are in place to notify these parties of any periods of unavailability. The agreement with these parties makes the Authority's obligation to provide these services discretionary.

#### Financial Implications & Value for Money

13. Revenue is received from partners to assist in funding the Marine Rescue Unit. The current revenue arrangements with these partners are on a five year plan. The plan is due for renewal in April 2013 and work has commenced with renewing the arrangements.

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

14. All personnel who are offered the additional shifts at the MRU must have the suitable experience and have received the relevant training. The boat must only be declared available when a staffing level of 3 is established as this ensures a safe system of work is in place.

#### Contribution to Our Mission – To Achieve; Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Firefighters”

15. The availability of the Marine Rescue Unit with a full staffing level ensures safe systems of work are in place for staff whilst delivering a non-statutory service to the County.

#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

#### **\*Glossary of Terms**

MRU – Marine Rescue Unit