

# **MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**4<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2012**

## **MINUTES**

### **Present:**

Councillors Dave Hanratty (Chair), Robbie Ayres, Vi Bebb, Andrew Blackburn, Les Byrom, Darren Dodd, Ted Grannell, John Kelly, Jimmy Mahon, Linda Maloney, Pat Moloney, Barbara Murray, Steve Niblock and Denise Roberts

### **Apologies were received from:**

Councillors Roy Gladden, Tony Newman, Lesley Rennie and Sharon Sullivan

### **Announcements Prior to the Agenda:**

The North West Employers Regional Development Committee met on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 2012 to consider the findings of the Assessment of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority's application for a review of Level 1 award and the application for Level 2 NW Employers Elected Member Development Charter award, both of which were assessed on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2012.

Assessors were impressed with all aspects of the application and were satisfied to renew Level 1 and grant Level 2 NW Employers Elected Member Development Charter status to Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority.

The Chair extended thanks on behalf of the Authority to the Member Development Group, to the Officers responsible and especially to the young people involved, for the hard work and determination shown over the years..

## **1. Preliminary Matters**

- a) There were no declarations of interest were made in relation to items of business on the agenda.
- b) There were no additional items of business that were determined by the chair to be considered as a matter of urgency
- c) The following items required the absence of the press and public due to the possibility of disclosure of exempt information.
  - Item 16: Part 2 of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting.
  - Item 17: Application for early release of pension

## **2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – Part 1**

Members considered the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 31<sup>st</sup> July 2012. The minutes were approved as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

### **3. Audio Recordings of Authority Meetings** (CFO/119/12)

Members considered Report CFO/119/12 of the Clerk to the Authority concerning the recommendations of the Executive Leadership Board to cease audio recordings of any Authority meeting.

#### **Resolved that:**

- a) The audio recording of Authority Meetings be ceased with immediate effect, and
- b) The Clerk to the Authority be instructed to undertake an administrative review in 12 months time to assess the outcomes.

### **Items 4 – 7 were discussed together**

**Items 4,5,6,& 7 concerned the same subject matter, from the differing perspectives of the District Councils within Merseyside which necessitated separate reports.**

Members considered Reports CFO/127/12, CFO/128/12, CFO/133/12, and CFO/134/12 of the Deputy Chief Executive concerning the proposed local Council Tax Benefit Schemes of (respectively) Sefton Council, Liverpool City Council, St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council and Knowsley Council. It was reported by the Head of Finance that Wirral Council were unable to release their information in time for the meeting due to Senior Management changes within the Council. The District Councils are consulting with Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority as a precepting Authority as required under legislation.

Members were keen that the cuts to Council Tax Benefit grants and the subsequent revision of Council Tax Benefit Schemes by all councils should not further reduce the budget of the Authority and that the revisions should be cost neutral.

Members considered the recommendations to each individual report. Their resolutions are detailed below:

#### **It was resolved that:**

The Authority write to Wirral Council requesting from them a Council Tax Benefit solution that is cost neutral to the Authority, and

### **4. Council Tax Benefit Localisation Scheme (Sefton)** (CFO/127/12)

#### **Resolved that:**

- a) Sefton Council's proposed Council Tax Benefit Localisation Scheme be noted; and

- b) A response to Sefton Council be approved in line with the following points made in the report:
- the difficult financial position and choices having to be made by Sefton Council in designing a scheme be recognised; and
  - the proposed scheme, as one that minimises the likelihood of additional savings for Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority, be supported; and
  - the risks around the scheme be recognised and Sefton Council be asked to consider what joint monitoring reports can be provided to Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority to monitor those risks throughout the financial year.

## **5. Council Tax Benefit Localisation Scheme (Liverpool)**

(CFO/128/12)

Resolved that:

- a) Liverpool City Council's proposed Council Tax Benefit Localisation Scheme be noted; and
- b) A response to Liverpool City Council be approved in line with the following points made in the report:
- the difficult financial situation and tough choices for Liverpool in designing a scheme be recognised;
  - option B, as the option that minimises the potential for additional cuts for Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority be supported;
  - Liverpool City Council is asked to provide greater details as the design of the scheme progresses;
  - Liverpool City Council be asked to consider what monitoring arrangements around risks will be set in place to allow Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority to manage financial risk.

## **6. Council Tax Benefit Localisation Scheme (St Helens)**

(CFO/133/12)

Resolved that:

- a) St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council's proposed Council Tax Benefit Localisation Scheme be noted; and
- b) A response to St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council be approved in line with the following points made in the report:
- the difficult financial position and choices that have had to be made by St. Helens in designing a scheme be recognised; and
  - the proposed scheme and consultation, as one that minimises the likelihood of additional savings for Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority, be supported; and
  - the risks around the scheme be recognised and St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council be asked to consider what joint monitoring reports can be provided to MFRA to monitor those risks throughout the financial year.

## **7. Council Tax Benefit Localisation Scheme (Knowsley)**

(CFO/134/12)

Resolved that:

- a) Knowsley Council's proposed Council Tax Benefit Localisation Scheme be noted; and
- b) A response to Knowsley Council be approved in line with the following points made in the report:
  - the difficult financial position and choices that have had to be made by Knowsley Council in designing a scheme be recognised; and
  - the proposed scheme, as one that minimises the likelihood of additional savings for Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority, be supported; and
  - the risks around the scheme be recognised and Knowsley Council be asked to consider what joint monitoring reports can be provided to Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority to monitor those risks throughout the financial year.

## **8. Community Right to Challenge**

(CFO/141/12)

Members considered the Report CFO/141/12 of the Clerk to Authority concerning the Community Right to Challenge brought into force under the Localism Act 2011.

Resolved that:

- a) The implications of the report and the draft documents be noted; and
- b) The draft documents be approved for publication on the Authority's website.

## **9. Five Year Business Intelligence Report**

(CFO/131/12)

Members considered the Report CFO/131/12 of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer concerning fire related performance across Merseyside over the past 5 years.

Resolved that:

The contents of the report be noted.

## **10. Five Year Review of Fatalities in Accidental Dwelling Fires**

(CFO/135/12)

Members considered the Report CFO/135/12 of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer concerning fatalities occurring in accidental dwelling fires during the fiscal year 2011/12 and historical analysis of fatality data.

Resolved that:

The contents of the report be noted.

**11. Public Consultation and Engagement – Centralised Co-ordination and Support**

(CFO/139/12)

Members considered the Report CFO/139/12 of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer concerning the intention to adopt a centralised approach to the development of public consultation and engagement plans to be co-ordinated by the Strategic Planning Directorate.

Resolved that:

- a) The proposals to adopt a centrally co-ordinated approach to public consultation be approved; and
- b) The establishment of a budget reserve to fund the increased amount of public consultation that will be required in relation to the anticipated budget cuts be approved.

**12. Operational Assessment Overview**

(CFO/132/12)

Members considered the Report CFO/132/12 of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer concerning the Operational Assessment Review currently taking place and the Peer Challenge visit that will take place from the 19<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012.

Resolved that:

The contents of the report be noted.

**13. Operational Policy Review**

(CFO/129/12)

Members considered the Report CFO/129/12 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning a review of the Operational Planning and Operational Training Policies.

Resolved that:

The changes made to the Operational Planning and Operational Training Policies be approved.

**14. Impact of the Budget Cuts on the Dynamic Reserve**

(CFO/140/12)

Members considered Report CFO/140/12 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning the impact of the budget cuts in years 1 and 2 of the spending review on the dynamic reserve (appliance availability).

Resolved that:

- a) The contents of the report be noted; and
- b) A report be brought to the Authority showing figures to compare with other Authorities; and
- c) The Chief Fire Officer continue to use delegated powers for operational management under the Authority scheme of delegation to mitigate the impact of the budget cuts on operational response.

## **15. Conferences**

Members considered attendance at the LGA Conference:

***Rising to the Challenge: Developing New Community Safety Business Models in the Public Sector*** taking place on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2012 at Local Government House, London.

Members discussed the usefulness of the conference paying particular regard to value for money, and nominations were received for attendance.

Resolved that:

- a) The Authority would be/would not be represented at the Conference; and
- b) The final decision as to who should attend be delegated to the Chief Fire Officer.

**Members of the Press and Public left the room at 14:02hrs for Members to consider EXEMPT items 16 and 17.**