REPORT TO: Meeting of the	MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
DATE:	15TH JANUARY 2013
REPORT NO.	CFO/005/13
REPORTING OFFICER:	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
CONTACT OFFICER:	PETER RUSHTON, DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS, EXT 4557
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	ANDREW IWEDIEBO - NEW MEDIA MANAGER, EXTN: 4418
SUBJECT:	WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT

THERE ARE NO APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT

Purpose of Report

1. To Inform members of a report which was approved by members of the Strategic Equality Group on MFRA Website development and how new changes will affect and improve the operation of the website and enhance user satisfaction for the general public when visiting.

Recommendation

2. To inform members of the ongoing work of the Corporate Communications team to redesign/redevelop the MFRA Website.

Introduction & Background

3. Over the past few months the Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority's website has undertaken some major changes. Regular visitors to the website will no doubt note some of the changes and these will be immediately obvious. However, one or two of the changes, although requiring a huge undertaking, may not be so apparent. In an effort to inform members and keep them abreast of these changes, they are listed below.

    - New Mobile Design
    - Heritage and education website
    - Winter Heating Campaign website
    - HFSC website
    - CO website
    - Christmas Safety Campaign website
    - New Operational Response data
    - New Prevention and Protection data

- New Operational Equipment data
- Community safety
- Threat response

Changes - Fluid layout

4.   A continuation of the fluid layout. The majority of users have their screen resolution set to 800 x 600 however that average resolution is continually increasing. This means there is a necessity for MFRA to cater for users with bigger monitors who are running their desktop at higher resolutions. The MFRA website continues to work with a full fluid resolution! This type of layout will expand on screen to fill all available space. The advantages of this are:

- Dead space is eliminated as the design fills out the entire available area.
- Increased font sizes work well at high resolutions.

New Mobile Interface

5.   With almost half of UK Internet users going online via mobile data connections, it is more important than ever to ensure that users are up to speed with mobile technology and how it can be used to benefit Authority business. The MFRA external website is the first 'fire & rescue' website to output a more accessible, mobile friendly version.

6.   The mobile website is easy to use, and integrates well across diverse platforms and devices. This is achieved through the rough bigger buttons and streamlining the navigation for easier use through mobile iPhone's, Android phones, current Smartphone's, iPads and other web tablets.

7.   These are highlighted links with improved visibility and the improved search engine searches through millions of words across thousands of documents of multiple types in a fraction of a second, which is much improved from our previous version. It also;

- discovers web pages and documents automatically by crawling the web-site
- indexes documents for high speed searching
- By surrounding portions of a query with quotes it will allow the contained keywords to be treated as a phrase; search results will contain the words in the phrase in precise order.
- Result summary will be an extract of the original text showing as many of the search keywords as possible. Summary can include multiple extracts from various parts of the document when words are not close enough.
- Word variations are (optionally) included in the search
- Brackets indicate grouping, "-" indicates a NOT operator, OR indicates OR logic, AND indicates AND logic (implicit when not specified). Groups can be nested to any number of levels, and may contain any legal expressions

(phrases, NOT, OR, AND). Wildcards * can be used to indicate partial matches.

- Auto-complete can be enabled for the SearchBox
- complete result text preview inline in the results
- Most files of common formats can be indexed for searching.
- Automatic link discovery through the web-site spider which reads and indexes pages.

Equality & Diversity Implications

8. The paper was produced for the Equality and Diversity Strategy Group to outline the improvements made, particularly in relation to making it more accessible for everyone.

User accessibility

9.
- There is improved user ability to change background colour and page contrast to assist the visually impaired and dyslexic.
- The user will also see clear markings at the head of all pages to easily change the text size to fit their needs.
- The website has been built with a facility that makes it accessible so that font size is easily controllable by the user.
- The new design will also offer clear access points, via icons on the front index page to MFRA social network services Twitter, Facebook and video sharing website YouTube.

Staff Implications

10. All staff use the website on a regular basis which can be accessed via the Portal.

11. All work has been undertaken by the internal Corporate Communications team.

Legal implications

12. Changes to EU Law relating to the use of 'Cookies'

From the 25th May 2012 there are changes in EU legislation in relation to the EU's Privacy and Electronic Communications Directive. This requires that on visiting a public website the users must consent to the storage or access information on consumers' computer.

13. The universal technique of storing information is commonly known as a cookie. A cookie is a small file that a website puts on a user's computer so that it can remember something, for example the user's preferences, at a later time. The majority of businesses and organizations in the UK currently use cookies for varying reasons. For example; analyzing consumer browsing habits, remembering a user's payment details when buying products online, etc.

14. These changes were implemented on our website week ending 06/07/2012 and when necessary the user will be prompted to turn on cookies when using any of the site functions which require this type of functionality.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

15. The website offers a low cost communications facility. Improvements are all done in-house by the New Media Manager. The New Media manager spends about 30% of his time on the website so the cost annually of provision is about £20,000.

16. Since the beginning of 2011 and the financial austerity measures enforced onto our organization there has been an almost 100% reduction in the printed publications outside of the Hot News magazine.

17. This see's the MFRA website and online services as the main vehicle used by the Corporate Communications department to reflect a diverse community and workforce and keep costs down.

18. By the end of 2012 we will have finished the development of our online newsletter application which will be available for use service wide. This will consist of a moderating facility which will enable the created newsletters to be vetted by the Corporate Communications team. This will in turn allow all new MFRA online publications to 'reflect a diverse community and workforce in terms of both content and images'. This application and process will continue to cut costs without impinging on the dissemination of information to stakeholders, partners and the general public.

Risk Management, Health & Safety and Environmental Implications

19. There are no health and safety, environmental or risk management issues

20. Local communities will find it far easier to access information about the services provided by the Authority for local people.

Background Paper

21. There will be a presentation with the report.

Glossary of terms

22. None