

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

3 JULY 2019

MINUTES

Present: **Cllr Leslie T. Byrom CBE (Chair)** Councillors
Lynne Thompson, Janet Grace, Brian Kenny, James Roberts,
Jean Stapleton, Paul Tweed, Andrew Makinson, Del Arnall,
Bruce Berry, Angela Coleman, Doreen Knight, Linda Maloney
and Emily Spurrell

Also Present:

Apologies of absence were received from: Cllr
Lesley Rennie, Cllr Steff O'Keeffe, Cllr Lisa Preston and Cllr
Barrington

7. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Prior to the start of the meeting, information regarding general housekeeping was provided by the Chair to all in attendance.

The Chair confirmed to all present that the proceedings of the meeting would be filmed and requested that any members of the public present who objected to being filmed, make themselves known. No members of the public voiced any objection therefore the meeting was declared open and recording commenced.

1. Preliminary Matters

The Authority considered the identification of any declarations of interest, matters of urgency or items that would require the exclusion of the press and public due to the disclosure of exempt information.

Resolved that:

- a) no declarations of interest were made by individual Members in relation to any item of business on the Agenda
- b) no additional items of business were determined by the Chair to be considered as matters of urgency; and
- c) no items of business required the exclusion of the press and public during consideration thereof because of the possibility of the disclosure of exempt information.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Authority, held on 13th June 2019, were approved as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

3. SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2018/19 DEC - MARCH UPDATE

Members considered Report CFO/039/19 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning scrutiny of performance against the objectives and the performance targets/outcomes as set out in the Service Delivery Plan 2018/19 for the period April 2018 to March 2019.

Members were provided with a presentation in support of this report, by Jackie Sutton – IRMP Officer.

Members were advised that although the report is presenting the recorded performance for the period December 2018 to March 2019, it does in fact provide performance information for the entire financial year, as the figures are cumulative.

They were also informed that a “RAG” system has been introduced for action statuses, with Green indicating that an action is now complete and is business as usual; Amber indicating that the action is in progress; and Red signifying that the action has not yet commenced.

In terms of the Key Performance Indicators (KPI's), Members were advised that performance around some of the KPI's, was impacted by the particularly warm weather experienced during the summer months, which resulted in a peak in incidents.

The presentation highlighted to Members, a number of KPI's that were on target (green), including:

- total number of primary fires.
- number of accidental dwelling fires.
- number of deliberate fires in occupied and unoccupied properties.
- number of deliberate ASB fires attended.
- Total number of false alarms attended.
- Sickness absence.
- Attendance standard.
- Number of injuries occurring in accidental and deliberate dwelling fires.

Members were informed that during 2018/19, there were unfortunately 4 fatalities in accidental dwelling fires, although this is the lowest number recorded. It was also highlighted that each fatality occurred within an area of high deprivation.

The presentation went on to advise of KPI's where performance was within 10% of the target (amber), which are as follows:

- Total number of incidents attended.
- Percentage of 999 calls answered within 10 seconds.
- Total number of fires attended.
- Total number of secondary fires attended.
- Total carbon output of all buildings.

Members were advised that most of these KPI's were affected by the protected hot weather; and resultant increase in incidents and calls.

With regards to total carbon output of all buildings, it was noted that a contributory factor to the performance being over target, is likely to be increase in the water usage at the Training and Development Academy, due to recruit courses.

Members were then informed that the performance target for the following KPI's, was not achieved:

- Total number of emergency calls received.
- Total number of special services attended.
- Number of RTC's.

In relation to total special services, it was explained to Members that some of those incidents we would not want to reduce, for example those that we attend on humanitarian grounds; and others, MFRA are not able to influence, such as assisting other agencies and lift rescues. Therefore, Members were advised that for next year, special services will be recorded for assurance only, with no targets set.

With regards to the number of RTC's attended, Members were advised that these have increased, as have the number of injuries in RTC's. However, they were also informed that there are a large number of RTC's that MFRA do not attend; and when the figures are combined with those of Merseyside Police, there has been an overall reduction in the number of RTC's across Merseyside.

Questions were raised by Members regarding how MFRA's performance compares to other FRA's.

Members were advised that we do benchmark against other Metropolitan FRA's; and nationally. They were informed that in relation to sickness, MFRA are one of the top 5 best performing FRA's in the Country, which is undoubtedly due to the fantastic support provided by Occupational Health and our capability process.

With regards to fire related benchmarks, they were advised that our performance is very good in relation to fire fatalities, however we do have high numbers of accidental dwelling fires, which are related to high levels of

deprivation. Members were advised that the issue around deprivation will be considered at the forthcoming Strategy Day.

It was confirmed to Members that we are a high performing fire and rescue service, which is highlighted by the HMICFRS Inspection Report.

Members were also informed that the increase in incidents and calls during the period, were largely due to the hot weather and spate conditions, which resulted in an extremely busy summer period. They were informed that this position will have been replicated across the Country.

With regards to our attendance times, Members were informed that MFRA have one of the fastest average response times in the Country. They were also informed that as a result of decisions to have only wholtime firefighters, MFRA are able to do more to protect people within the community.

Questions were raised by Members regarding the number of RTC's and the impact of MFRA's work in this area.

Members were advised that Merseyside Police are aware of all RTC's within Merseyside, whereas MFRA are only aware of those that we attend. They were also informed that the incidents we attend, are not necessarily the incidents that MFRA are working directly to prevent. For example, a lot of MFRA's work around reducing RTC's, is focused around educating young, new drivers, as opposed to older drivers. Members were informed that the HMICFRS Inspection did drill down to the young driver group, to identify the impact of MFRA's intervention.

Members Resolved that:

The attached reports be approved for publication on the Website.

4. HMICFRS Inspection Report

Members considered Report CFO/040/19 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the content of the Service's inspection report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

Members were informed that the Inspectors visited MFRA in December to undertake fieldwork, and gather evidence in relation to the three key pillars:

- How effective is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe from fires and other risk?
- How efficient is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe from fires and other risks?
- How well does the fire and rescue service look after its people?

Members were advised that the role of the Inspectors is to act as members of the public.

The overall summary of the inspection findings, was read out to Members; and it was specifically highlighted that to date, MFRS is the only FRS in the Country to get a rating of “Outstanding” in two categories; and one of only five FRS’s to receive a “Good” rating across all three pillars.

It was explained to Members that the report is really positive; and something which should be celebrated by everyone involved with MFRS. They were informed that it is the first time MFRS have been inspected by HMI for ten years, with the new inspection regime now being more critical and having more influence, than the Peer Review regime that was in place previously.

Members were also advised that MFRS have been approached by a number of FRS’s, to support them in making improvements; and as the Lead Authority for National Resilience, we should be providing support to others.

It was highlighted to Members that MFRS did receive one rating of “Requires Improvement” against the category – “Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity”. Members were advised that Officers accept that more work is required in this area. However their attention was drawn to the national report for tranche 2 inspections, which shows that for all the FRS’s inspected within tranche 2, MFRS has the highest percentage of female firefighters.

They were also advised that with regards to the percentage of BAME firefighters within MFRS as a proportion of the BAME resident population across Merseyside, MFRS are very close to being reflective of its communities, which compares favourably with the other FRS’s within tranche 2.

However Members were assured that officers will not rest on their laurels and work will continue, including around improving the culture of the organisation moving forward, to ensure that it is conducive to positive relations.

Comments were made by Members with regards to the way in which the workforce figures are presented within the report. It was noted that the firefighter cost per person per year figure for MFRS looks expensive when compared to the national average. However, this will be due to the fact that MFRS do not have any community retained firefighters. It was suggested that cost per incident may be a better indication of value for money; and Members were informed that HMICFRS are still working through the best way to benchmark.

Comments were made by Members regarding the retention of female firefighters; and it was requested that further information be brought back to Members regarding associated policies.

It was suggested that this issue be picked up through scrutiny, with a review around family friendly policies and staff retention, being added onto the Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Plan.

Members wished to place their thanks on record to all staff and everyone involved with MFRS, for the fantastic achievement. It was noted that although there is always room for improvement, the Inspection Report has been particularly heartening.

Members Resolved that:

- a. The HMICFRS inspection report (Appendix 1), national tranche 2 report and comparisons with other fire and rescue services (Appendices 2 and 3), be noted.
- b. The findings of the inspection report and the areas of strength identified, be noted.
- c. The steps being taken to address any areas for improvement including the intention to create an action plan (Appendix 4), be noted.
- d. The Chief Fire Officer's proposals to acknowledge the positive outcomes of the inspection, be noted.
- e. A review around family friendly policies and staff retention, be added to the Scrutiny Committees Forward Work Plan.

5. IRMP supplement 2019/21 post-consultation report

Members considered Report CFO/038/19 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the outcomes of public consultation on the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Supplement 2019/21; and to seek approval for the publication of the final, post –consultation version.

Members were informed that this report demonstrates that MFRA have already taken on board the learning from the HMICFRS Inspection and are looking to apply that learning to make improvements.

Members were provided with an overview of the consultation process and the key findings from that consultation, including the fact that over 97% of consultees preferred the alternative IRMP proposals to those within the original 2017-20 IRMP proposals.

The main proposals were outlined to Members, which include:

- Increasing the number of available fire appliances from 26 to 30. (27 immediately available during the day with a further 3 available on a 30 minute recall; and 21 immediately available during the night with a further 9 available on a 30 minute recall).
- Increase the number of firefighters from 620 to 642 (plus 20 in training)
- Maintain night time cover at Liverpool City and Wallasey Community Fire Stations, based on the introduction of a Hybrid Model.
- Establish a ridership of 5 personnel at our 10 key stations.

- Increase the Protection establishment by 5 Protection Officers; and the introduction of a Fire Engineer Role.

Members were advised that if these proposals are approved, it will be the first time since 2006 that firefighter numbers have increased. They were also informed that no other FRS in the Country is looking to increase their firefighter and appliance numbers, at this time; and the proposals combined will ensure that MFRS are providing a better service to the public.

Members welcomed the proposals, but in terms of finance, sought assurance that if approved, MFRA would not experience issues in the future.

Members were advised that the financial implications were discussed at the Budget Strategy Day in February; and would be discussed further at the forthcoming Strategy Day. They were assured that there are no proposals which cannot be sustained.

Members were advised that MFRA have high levels of debt and high levels of reserves. Therefore, it is proposed to utilise underspend and some reserves, in order to pay off some debt and release additional revenue, which will make the proposals sustainable. They were advised that this situation provides a real opportunity to invest in MFRS; and should we be faced with further austerity or issues in the future, we would only be in the same position as other FRS's.

Members were also advised that the proposals around increasing the number of available appliances to 30, is based on the number of appliances often required at large incidents being around 20, plus the requirement to ensure that during such incidents, the 10 key stations can remain covered. This will ensure that MFRS is more resilient in the future.

Members were informed that a number of emergent risks are also addressed within the proposals.

The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that he was thrilled to be able to present these proposals to Members, as a means of re-investing in MFRS.

Further re-assurance around the financial sustainability of the proposals, was provided to Members by the Treasurer; and Members were advised that if our plans and assumptions proved to be over-optimistic, as a worst case scenario, we would simply stop recruitment for a period of time.

Further questions were raised by Members in relation to whether all community fire stations would remain Safe Haven's. It was confirmed to Members that they would, along with being reporting centres for Hate Crime and providing defibrillators for community use.

Members wholeheartedly commended the proposals; and thanked officers for their vision in identifying proposals which will meet the Authority's objective of keeping Merseyside as safe as possible.

Members Resolved that:

- a. The responses to consultation, be noted as having been adequately considered by officers and reflected within the IRMP supplement 2019/21 (Appendix 1), where appropriate.
- b. Areas of the IRMP supplement, be noted as having a direct impact upon staff. In line with all staffing matters the IRMP supplement has been the subject of additional staff consultation/negotiation.
- c. The proposals within this IRMP supplement, be noted as having been subject to extensive public consultation. The outcomes of these consultations have been attached as appendices to this report.
- d. The IRMP supplement for 2019/21 and its implementation - which will provide increased resources to the communities of Merseyside for the first time in many years, be approved.
- e. The IRMP supplement 2019/21, be approved for publication in a designed format.

6. Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Plan

Members considered Report CFO/041/19 of the Monitoring Officer, concerning the DRAFT Forward Work Plan for the Authority's Scrutiny Committee; and the involvement of partners/ key stakeholders in some scrutiny reviews.

Members were provided with an overview of the report, which highlighted a recent change of approach to scrutiny.

Members were advised that training that had been provided to Members and Officers, around effective scrutiny and the different types of scrutiny review that could be utilised.

It was explained to Members that the Scrutiny Committee have received presentations from different Departments, which identified a number of areas for scrutiny. Members were advised that several "Rapid Reviews" have been conducted throughout the year; and other areas identified for scrutiny, have been collated into a draft Forward Work Plan for the coming year.

Members were informed that in order to enable an effective flow of business throughout the year; and to enable all topics to be covered, it is proposed to revert back to having generic Scrutiny meetings for 2019/20, rather than the topic specific meetings that took place during 2018/19.

Members requested that a topic around deprivation be added to the Forward Work Plan; and it was suggested that this issue be captured within the review into the impact of our Prevention activities.

It was also noted, further to discussions in relation to Agenda Item 4, that a review around family friendly policies and staff retention, be added into the Forward Work Plan.

It was also highlighted to Members that the Terms of Reference for all Committees, includes the provision to refer items for scrutiny.

Members Resolved that:

- a. The DRAFT FwP for the Authority's Scrutiny Committee (attached at Appendix A), be approved.
- b. The reversion to generic Scrutiny Committee meetings, rather than remit focused meetings, be approved.
- c. The involvement of partners/ key stakeholders in some scrutiny reviews (as indicated on the DRAFT FwP), to provide assurance regarding the effectiveness of joint working arrangements, be approved.
- d. The review contained within the DRAFT FwP, around the "Impact of Prevention Activity", be expanded to incorporate issues around deprivation.
- e. A review around family friendly policies and staff retention, be added onto the FwP.

Close

Date of next meeting Thursday, 17 October 2019

Signed: _____

Date: _____