

**MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**MEETING OF THE**

**POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**19 DECEMBER 2019**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Cllr James Roberts (Chair) Councillors Angela Coleman, Lisa Preston, Lesley Rennie, Jean Stapleton, Andrew Makinson and Les Byrom

**Also Present:**

**Apologies of absence were received from:**  
Steff O'Keeffe and Barrington

**1. Preliminary Matters**

Members considered the identification of declarations of interest, any urgent additional items, and any business that may require the exclusion of the press and public.

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 to be considered as matters of urgency were determined by the Chair; 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.

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that the third and final tranche of the HMICFRS Inspections had now concluded, with all 45 FRS's now having been inspected. Members were informed that although a number of services, particularly those who participated in the pilot, fared well, Merseyside were the only FRS to achieve "outstanding" in 2 areas.

With regards to the State of the Nation's Fire & Rescue Services Report, Members were informed that this was due to have been released, however with the General Election, this has now been put back; and is expected to be circulated in January.

Members commented that this is good news for MFRA; and that the Government should now be encouraged to move to the next stage, regarding

the sharing of best practice and mentoring, to ensure that all FRS's can be brought up to the same level.

Members also commented that the outcome of the inspections highlight that the position of MFRA around maintaining wholetime firefighters, is paying dividends.

Discussion took place around publicising the outcome and highlighting MFRA's role in National Resilience. Members were advised that the focus at the moment is on the Tranche 3 report. However, the state of fire report is likely to give specific recognition to MFRA when it is issued; and as such, Members were advised that it would be more appropriate to wait until that report is issued, to publicise the outcome for MFRA.

A question was raised by Members as to the extent to which the inspections have been a benchmarking exercise. Members were advised that FRS's have not been formally inspected for a number of years; and as such, the more robust inspection regime, will enable benchmarking. Members were advised that discussion has taken place around the next round of inspections, which are likely to follow the same format; and it was noted that this will enable direct comparison and benchmarking.

Members were informed that there will be some changes however, such as services may move tranches; and for MFRA, the Service Liaison Officer will change. However for MFRA, it will very much be normal business, with the Inspectorate being encouraged to come and see what we do.

Members were also informed that we will be benchmarking against ourselves; and that in the next round of inspections, we will hopefully have moved on with improvements observed.

Discussion also took place around the potential inclusion of corporate governance in future inspections; and Members commented that this is something that the Authority would be open to.

## **2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, held on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2019, were approved as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

## **3. Part 2 EXEMPT minutes**

The Part 2 – EXEMPT Minutes of the previous meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2019, were approved as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

## **4. Audit Findings Report 2018/19**

Michael Green was in attendance, representing the Authority's external auditors – Grant Thornton; and presenting their Audit Findings Report for 2018/19.

Michael introduced himself and informed Members that he was a Director with Grant Thornton; and had recently been appointed as the Engagement Lead for MFRA.

Members were informed that the process was now substantially complete, with only some minor administrative work required; and that Grant Thornton are pleased to report that an unqualified audit statement has been issued.

Members were advised that the presentation of the report is much later than usual this year, due to a number of reasons. They were advised that there have been a number of additional areas of work required, for example around Pensions as a result of the McCloud case; and an issue around the valuation of land and buildings, which has led to a full re-evaluation completed in September 2019, which resulted in a material adjustment to the statement.

Members were also advised that there have been a number of other amendments made, however none which impact on the general fund, with the majority being balance sheet movements.

Members were taken through the report, with the key areas highlighted.

The areas of significant risk were highlighted to Members, which include improper revenue recognition; and management override of controls. No issues were found with either of these risks.

With regards to the risk around the valuation of land and buildings, Members were advised that there has been increasing scrutiny from regulators. They were informed that it was identified at an early stage that not all of the Authority's asset base had been valued since 2015, which could result in a material misstatement. As such, Members were advised that Officers commissioned a full re-valuation, which resulted in valuation adjustments of £17m within the financial statements; and that no further issues were identified.

In relation to the audit risk around valuation of pension fund liability, Members were informed that this is the largest figure on the balance sheet; and represents a significant estimate. Members were informed that as a result of the impact of the McCloud transitional protection pensions ruling and the current legal position, the Authority's gross pension liability has increased by £46m.

A further significant audit risk highlighted to Members, was around accounting for PFI. Members were advised that the draft financial statements did not include the required disclosure of the fair value of the PFI liability, however this has subsequently been calculated and disclosed within the revised financial statements. Members were advised that no other issues were identified.

With regards to other matters identified, Members were informed that there had been 3 adjustments. One was identified by officers during the preparation of the financial statements, regarding an error in the IAS 19 pension valuation provided to the Authority by the Local Government Pension Fund actuary. Members were informed that the other two relate to pensions, with one being in relation to a reclassification issue around the Firefighters Pension Fund account;

and the other being around how the Authority accounted for Top-Up Grant received in respect of the Firefighter Pension Scheme.

In relation to the use of the Going Concern assumption, Members were advised that auditors have not identified any issues.

The other mandatory communication requirements were highlighted to Members; and apart from written representations regarding the floor area of land and buildings and the assumptions and estimates underlying the valuation, Members were informed that there is nothing else to point out.

With regards to the auditors other responsibilities under the Code, Members were advised that there are no issues.

In relation to the Value for Money Conclusion, Members were informed that there was one significant risk identified around financial sustainability, including delivery of the reserves and estates strategies. With regards to reserves, it was highlighted to Members that the Authority have robust arrangements and healthy reserves, however these will need to be monitored as the majority of reserves are committed.

Members were advised that the report confirms the independence of Grant Thornton. It also provides further detail regarding the audit adjustments made; and information regarding the audit fee. Members were advised that the final audit fee has yet to be confirmed, but will be higher than the original proposed amount, due to additional work required.

Members Resolved that:

The content of the report, be noted.

## **5. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2018/19 - APPROVAL of AUDITED STATEMENTS**

Members considered Report CFO/061/19 of the Treasurer, concerning the audited 2018/19 Statement of Accounts and letter of representation.

Members were informed that the Draft Statement of Accounts were presented to the Policy & Resources Committee in July, were it was resolved that:

- The unaudited Statement of Accounts be approved and authorised for issue.
- The audit opinion will follow once the updated asset valuation has been completed and shared with the external auditor.
- The Draft Letter of Representation in relation to the audited 2018/19 accounts, be noted.
- Once audit have finalised their work, it be noted that an audited Statement of Accounts and Letter of Representation, will come back to Members for approval.

Members were therefore advised that the purpose of this report, is to present the audited 2018/19 Statement of Accounts and Letter of Representation to Members for approval.

Members were informed that the previous agenda item, highlighted the findings of Grant Thornton's audit and the adjustments required to the financial statements. Members were advised that Officers had taken into account most of these adjustments in the draft financial statements presented to Members in July, with the only significant adjustment since then, being the increase in property valuations. They were advised that all of the required adjustments have now been included within the financial statements; and Grant Thornton have received the required assurance they needed to complete their audit work.

Members were advised that although the technical changes around Pensions and Property Valuations are significant in value, they do not impact on the general fund position, as they are all reversed out via contra entries within the statements. It was therefore highlighted to Members that it is important to note that these changes have not altered the 2018/19 revenue outturn position reported to Members on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2019.

Members Resolved that:

- a) The audited Statement of Accounts 2018/19, attached as Appendix A, be approved.
- b) The Letter of Representation in relation to the audited 2018/19 accounts, attached as Appendix B, be approved.

**6. FINANCIAL REVIEW 2019/20 - APRIL TO SEPTEMBER**

Members considered Report CFO/056/19 of the Treasurer, concerning a review of the financial position, revenue and capital, for the Authority for 2019/20. The Authority receives regular comprehensive financial reviews during the year, which provide a full health check on the Authority's finances. This report covers the period April to September 2019.

Members were advised that the purpose of the report is to provide Members with assurance that the approved budget remains robust and that the capital forecast of expenditure can be contained within the available resources.

Members were informed that the report can be split into 4 areas: Revenue, Capital, Reserves; and Treasury Management.

With regards to the revenue position, Members were advised that the net budget requirement of £60.282m, remains consistent with the original budget. They were informed that Paragraph 14 of the report, summarises the latest forecast revenue position; and after reviewing income and expenditure, Officers have identified the following savings:

- £250k savings off the firefighter employee budget, as a result of retirement numbers being slightly ahead of the expected forecast.
- £200k savings off the non-firefighter employee budget, as a result of staff vacancies arising from staff turnover in the year.
- £103k savings off the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) pension budget, as a result of an advanced payment discount from paying 3 years of the outstanding deficit upfront.
- £100k savings off the non-employee budget, identified on the supplies and services budget, as a result of the savings on professional fees.

Members were advised that as a result of the one-off savings, the report has identified a total saving of £653k; which it is proposed to utilise, to fund an increase in the minimum revenue position, in order to free up future debt servicing revenue budget.

In relation to capital, Members were informed that the capital programme has been updated for £718k scheme additions, which are summarised at paragraph 18 of the report.

Members were advised that these include:

- £470k increase in St. Helens Fire Station build costs, in order to future proof the station.
- £170k increase in fire appliance costs, due to the expectation that the unit price of fire appliances will increase in the future, requiring additional funding in order to maintain the capital programme of purchasing 12 fire appliances over the next 5 years.
- £78k increase in scheme funded by revenue, which include energy conservation and ICT.

Members were advised that following the successful sale of Upton and West Kirby Fire Stations, the actual level of receipts to that assumed, has resulted in an additional £1.750m, which will be used to reduce the level of borrowing. They were also informed that the report also includes a small amount of re-phasing having a net impact in this year's budget of £37.8k.

With regards to reserves, Members were informed that there are two reasons for changes in the reserves in Quarter 2. One is a result of the movement on reserves within the period; and the other is as a result of re-alignment of reserves by the CFO and Director of Finance.

Members were informed that the movement of reserves of £1.426m is summarised as follows:

- £1m – Merseyside Pension Fund has provisionally announced that due to an increase in value of the funds' assets, our outstanding LGPS deficit has been resolved without the need to use reserves, but in order to achieve the £1m planned investment in frontline services, we will still need to pay other debt off early. Therefore, £1m of the £6m earmarked

towards paying off the LGPS historic deficit, has been used to repay £1m debt.

- £300k – The Community Safety and Protection Committee approved a further £300k drawdown from the capital reserve in September to fund a planned increase in spend on the new St. Helens Fire Station.
- £126k – Drawdown is to fund specific projects such as energy conservation and Princes Trust.

Members were advised that the re-alignment of reserves is summarised within the report.

With regards to new potential risks and one off funding requirements identified by Officers since the last financial review report, Members were advised that as stated, the CFO and Director of Finance have reviewed the existing reserves to consider how to mitigate these risks over the short term.

- £350k will be used to increase the Clothing Reserve to £592k, to fund the initial issue of firefighter kit, following the move from a pooled kit issue to an individual kit issue.
- £1.55m will be utilised to increase the smoothing reserve, due to a number of potential risks around the government funding of pensions. One is the significant increase in employer's pension contributions following the 2016 Firefighter Pension Scheme (FPS) actuarial review, which increased employer's pension contributions by approximately 15%. The government currently gives the Authority a grant of just over £3m in support of this and they have yet to confirm if this will be made permanent.

Members were advised that the other potential risk is around the remedy in relation to the McCloud case, which depending on the numbers involved, the annual cost of firefighters reverting back to the FPS 1992 Scheme, may be in the order of hundreds of thousands of pounds. Therefore, Members were advised that it is the recommendation of Officers that the smoothing reserve be increased by £1.55m to £2m, in order to give the Authority the time to determine any longer terms financial costs associated with these issues.

- £1m increase in the General Revenue Reserve. Currently, the Authority has a general reserve of £2m; and Officers are recommending to increase this by £1m to £3m. This equates to 5% of the forecast Net Operating Expenditure, and as a general rule, this is deemed to be the appropriate level. Members were informed that the Authority has managed with a general reserve of £2m in the past, as it felt this was adequate given the level of specific reserves it held and the degree of certainty it had over medium term financial settlements. However, the level of specific reserves has reduced significantly and significant uncertainty exists over future government settlements. As such, the CFO and Director of Finance believe it is prudent to increase the General Revenue Reserve to £3m.

- Increase in the capital reserve of £2.1m - The Authority is currently planning to refurbish the Training and Development Academy (TDA), at an estimated cost of £5m. One of the alternative options to refurbishing the TDA, is to rebuild on a bigger site and include the rebuild as part of a future fire station review. It is likely alternative options will require additional funding and therefore, any of the £6m LGPS deficit repayment reserve not required, should be committed to fund any alternative TDA scheme, should that be something that Members support when the future proposals come back to Members for consideration.

With regards to Treasury Management, Members were advised that the Authority continues to buy in Treasury Management services from Liverpool City Council.

Some key details were highlighted to Members, including:

- Bank of England base rate remains at 0.75%.
- Treasury has increased the lending limit of the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) from £85bn to £95bn, at the same time the borrowing cost of newly arranged loans from PWLB increased by 1%. The policy change will have no immediate impact on MFRA, as the current expectation is that no new borrowing will need to happen for a number of years, in which time the policy and market could change.
- The Authority had investments of £43.8m as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019, which included a £30.1m firefighter pension grant. Members were informed that an analysis of investments can be found within the report.
- The Authority had outstanding debt of £37.3m. No new loans have been taken out over the period and current market conditions continue to be unfavourable for any debt rescheduling.

Comments were made by Members with regards to reserves; and highlighting to ministers the difference between general reserves and earmarked reserves to be used to fund specific projects. It was noted that using capital to fund revenue is not sustainable; and to not do so, is standard accounting practice. As such, Members commented that HMICFRS have been asked to re-confirm this point; and it was hoped that they would do so.

Members Resolved that:

- a) An increase in the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) payment of £0.653m funded from the forecast revenue savings identified within the report, be approved.
- b) The proposed revenue and capital budget changes outlined in the report, be approved.
- c) The realignment of reserves as outlined in the report, including the increase in the General Reserve from £2m to £3m, be approved.



- d) The Director of Finance be instructed to continue to work with budget managers to maximise savings in 2019/20.

## **7. Treasury Management Interim Report 2019/20**

Members considered Report CFO/057/19 of the Treasurer, concerning the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities. The Codes requires the Authority to review its Treasury Management activities during the year to ensure they are consistent with its approved Prudential Indicators. This report meets that requirement and outlines the Treasury Management activities and performance for the first half of the financial year 2019/20.

Members were informed that the report provides a summary on the key points of performance so far, which include:

- No new borrowing.
- Debt of £265k has been repaid with no further debt due to be repaid this year.
- The Authority had investments of £43.8m.
- The Bank of England base rate remained at 0.75%.
- PWLB rates fell during the first half of the year by 0.57%, however on the 9<sup>th</sup> October 2019, the cost of new loans increased by 1%.

Members were informed that Treasury Management activity for 2019/20, has been carried out in compliance with the relevant codes and statutes; and within the borrowing and treasury management limits approved by the Authority, as part of the budget setting process in February 2019.

Questions were raised by Members regarding the impact that the change in PWLB rates has had on the Treasury Management strategy. Members were informed that Officers will monitor market conditions and consider when the most appropriate time will be for borrowing.

A further question was raised by regarding investing with other local authorities and whether this is something we have done previously. It was confirmed to Members that it is something that we have done previously and something which is contained within the Treasury Management Strategy.

Members Resolved that:

The content of the report, be noted.

## **8. POST BONFIRE STRATEGY 2019**

Members considered Report CFO/063/19 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the outcomes of the 2019 Bonfire Period.

Members were provided with a presentation in support of this report, by Group Manager Ben Ryder, which highlighted the 2019 Bonfire Period outcomes and performance; and how those outcomes were achieved by staff.

Members were provided with an overview of the Arson Reduction Strategy 2017-20, devised due to the prevalence of arson, high deprivation; and high levels of serious and organised crime. Members were informed that a focus of the Strategy is around working with Merseyside Police and other partners; and that during the Bonfire Period, MFRS don't do anything different, we simply increase our level of activity.

The presentation highlighted to Members that during the 2019 Bonfire Period, there was a 33.61% reduction in the number of ASB fires. They were advised that there was 7 violence at work incidents during the period, which represents a reduction on the previous year, although a number of those incidents involved significant damage. Members were informed that there was 47.5 tonnes of bonfire material removed across Merseyside over the period; and a total of 105 target hardening visits undertaken to support some of the most vulnerable individuals within our communities. With regards to firework incidents, Members were informed that there was a total of 16 reported, however the severity of some of those incidents was high, resulting in life changing injuries. Members were advised that this issue will be considered further for next year.

The presentation went on to provide Members with some contextual figures regarding deliberate secondary fires during Bonfire periods, over the past 10 years. Members were advised that with the exception of 2013, 2019 has seen the lowest number of such incidents, with a total of 243 recorded. They were advised that the low number of incidents recording during 2013, was a result of the conscious decision to stack calls, due to the reduction in the number of appliances during that year.

With regards to how the performance was achieved, Member were informed that a funded social media campaign was ran over this year's Bonfire Period, which reached approximately 700,000 people. It was noted that this level of contact could not be achieved through staff on the ground alone; and that the use of social media to promote safety messages, will be a useful form of engagement moving forward.

The presentation provided Members with an overview of performance for each local authority area.

With regards to the Knowsley District, Members were advised that there was a good reduction in incidents during the Bonfire Period, on the previous year. They were informed that the Knowsley Street Intervention Team was deployed into high demand areas; and a new Crime and Communities Team was established within the District, with significant funding provided to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB). Members were also advised that although MFRS do not have certain powers to have an impact on ASB, through working closely with partners who do have the

necessary powers, dispersal zones were enforced within Whiston and Prescot; and 2 youths identified as setting deliberate fires within hotspot areas, were issued with ABC's (Acceptable Behaviour Contracts).

With regards to the Liverpool District, Members were informed that a significant reduction in incidents (28.4%) was observed this year. Members were advised that the Liverpool Street Intervention Team was deployed into high demand areas; and that £3,500 of funding was provided by Liverpool City Safe, which was utilised to run the social media campaign. They were also informed that Liverpool City Council dedicated to assisting with the removal of bonfire material, the large scale – River of Light event took place; and a total of 22 ABC's were issued.

Members were informed that the best performance in terms of reduction in incidents (66.1%), was observed within the Sefton District. They were advised that within the District, the Street Intervention Team was again deployed into high demand areas; and environmental issues are high on the agenda. Members were advised that a large scale fireworks display took place on Bonfire night, dispersal zones were put in place within a number of areas; and correspondence was sent to an individual known for fire setting, to advise them that they would be watched during the period.

In relation to the St. Helens District, Members were informed that it was the only District to see an increase in incidents (20.7%) on the previous year's figures. Members were advised that there is no Community Safety Partnership within the St. Helens District, which makes it more difficult for MFRS to engage with statutory partners. Members were also informed that there was an increase in the number of incidents within the town centre area of St. Helens; and that the incident hotspots for 2019, were different to the hotspots for previous years. However, Members were advised that there was some good work within the District, such as the "Sparks in the Park" event, held on Bonfire night.

Cllr Preston commented that she would raise the issue around Community Safety Partnership, within St. Helens Council; and the Chief Fire Officer also confirmed that he would be discussing the matter with the Chief Executive of St. Helens Council, commenting that agencies become more effective when they work together.

With regards to the Wirral District, Members were informed that there was a significant reduction in the number of incidents (52.4%). They were advised that 21 tonnes of bonfire material was removed during the period; and were informed of the involvement of the Probations Services Community Payback Team. Members were also informed that the Environment is also high on the agenda for Wirral Council; and that planning meetings within Wirral are jointly chaired by MFRS and Merseyside Police.

The presentation highlighted to Members that deliberate secondary fires predominantly occur in high demand areas – areas which also have high levels of deprivation, lower life expectancy; and are also priority areas for our partners.

Members were informed that our staff on the ground are actively targeting these areas with HFSC's and target hardening initiatives, to help build relationships and community cohesion; and start to have a preventative impact.

However, Members were also advised that one area MFRS have not been cognisant of up to now, is around the environment, which is becoming a high priority for the local authorities. It was highlighted to Members, that areas with the lowest levels of recycling, tend to be the worst areas for deliberate secondary fires; and as such, a behavioural change around recycling is required and needs to be considered at a policy level, which is something that MFRS need to consider how they can engage with moving forward.

Members were advised that the Chief Fire Officer is the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) Lead for Children and Young People; and although youth engagement activity is not statutory for fire and rescue services, the impact that it can have on the community is massive. They were informed that the value of youth engagement is more its social value in terms of outcomes for the community, rather than financial value.

Members were advised that during the Bonfire Period this year, Princes Trust students assisted with the staffing of tipper trucks, which saved MFRA almost £4k in staff costs.

In terms of further improvements moving forward, Members were advised of some ideas and comments raised during the Bonfire de-brief. They were informed of plans to engage better with the British Transport Police, with regards to individuals travelling and being involved in ASB; and to have separate tipper trucks for Knowsley and St. Helens. Members were also advised that there will be an increase in social media messaging around the risk of injury from firework misuse; and wider use of other social media platforms such as Instagram and the new MFRS Website, to try to engage as widely as possible. A further area that will be progressed, is the development of a new educational video, which will be co-produced with partners.

Members were informed that since the Arson Strategy was launched in 2017, it has had a significant impact on the number of deliberate secondary fires, which is the largest incident type. It was highlighted to Members that the substantial reduction in this type of incident, has enabled a significant amount of time to be put back into the system, which can be used for positive preventative work.

Members were informed that for the current financial year, the number of deliberate secondary fires is over 1000 below the target figure. Members were provided with a breakdown of the approximate time and resources required to attend an average deliberate secondary fire; and were informed that on average, this equates to approximately 1 hour and 26 minutes per incidents. It was therefore highlighted that a reduction of over 1000 deliberate secondary fires, enables a significant amount of time to be put back into the system for positive activity, in addition to a reduced impact on operational response times.

Members were also informed of the positive impact that the reduction in deliberate secondary fires has on the community. The economic impact of fire

was highlighted to Members, with it estimated that on average, the economic cost of each deliberate secondary fire is around £3,009. Therefore, a reduction of 1,185 such incidents, equates to an economic saving of over £3.5m. It was therefore highlighted to Members that the social value of MFRA prevention work is massive and should be noted.

The presentation went on to inform Members that a public health approach is now being taken towards reducing serious and organised crime across Merseyside, predicated on the “4 P’s” approach – Prepare, Prevent, Pursue, Protect. Members were informed that the aim is to create a behavioural change within communities, through the development of Place Based Plans within local authority areas, utilising a whole systems approach. Members were informed that through implementation of the strategy, MFRS are able to have different conversations with residents through regular arson campaigns in high demand areas; and to forge different relationships through our youth engagement provision, which have resulted in a change in behaviour of residents within our communities. As a result, MFRA are a key stakeholder in the development of those Place Based Plans.

Members were also informed of the introduction of a Violence Reduction Unit within Merseyside, with MFRA staff now embedded within that unit; and the 100 day Nesta Challenge, which is trialling different ways of working. Members were advised that these are 2 areas in which MFRA staff are involved in driving positive outcomes for communities.

With regards to the impact of the Arson Reduction Strategy, Members were advised that there have been year on year reductions in the number of deliberate secondary fires, whilst continuing to successfully deliver every other area of preventative work.

Members thanked GM Ryder for a very informative and positive presentation.

The Chief Fire Officer also informed Members that the activity highlighted within the presentation, is the reason we achieved an “outstanding” in the recent HMICFRS Inspection in relation to preventing fires and other risks, which recognises our investment in people. They were also informed that although the economic cost of fire can be quantified, the significant impact on the community cannot. It was also noted that we are the only FRA in the UK delivering targeted interventions in the way that MFRA are.

Members Resolved that:

The reduction and organisational gains outlined in the presentation, be noted.

## **9. STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2019-20**

Members considered Report CFO/058/19 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the Authority’s Statement of Assurance 2018/19, for publication on the Authority’s website.

Members were informed that the Authority's Statement of Assurance is a backwards looking document covering the financial year 2018/19; and that the Authority is required to produce the document each year.

Members Resolved that:

- a) The information contained within the report, be noted.
- b) The Authority's Draft Statement of Assurance 2018/19, be approved.
- c) The Statement of Assurance 2018/19, be signed by the Chair of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority and the Chief Fire Officer.

**10. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER 2019-20 APR-SEPT UPDATE**

Members considered Report CFO/059/19 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the current risks within the Corporate Risk Register, the status of the risks and associated control measures, including any updates for the period April to September 2019.

Members' attention was drawn to a new risk that has been included within the Corporate Risk Register, around the impact of the McCloud judgement.

An exert from a recent Fire & Rescue Services National Employers Circular, concerning the transitional protections pensions claims interim order on remedy, was read out to Members.

It was highlighted that in December 2018, the Court of Appeal found that the transitional protections unlawfully discriminated on age and the case therefore returned to the Employment Tribunal for it to determine remedy.

Members were advised that following a preliminary hearing, the Employment Tribunal have made an interim order; and it is anticipated that the final determination on that remedy issue, should be resolved around mid-July 2020.

Members were advised that Home Office are being pushed to issue guidance for FRS's around implementation, specifically around dealing with ill health retirements, backdated employee contribution; and taper arrangements.

Members were informed that this issue has been brought to their attention, as it has been raised previously in relation to the potential financial challenge as a result of the expected judgement. They were also informed that as a result of the transition arrangements, there will be an impact on the Authority's workforce planning assumptions. As such, the issue has been included within the Corporate Risk Register; and control measures have been put in place.

Members Resolved that:

The updated Corporate Risk Register for 2019/20, which incorporates the current status of those risks to September 2019, be approved.

**11. Updated Service Delivery Plan 2019/20**

Members considered Report CFO/060/19 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the updating of the Service Delivery Plan for 2019/20 to include actions resulting from the inspection of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Supplement 2019/21 and updated outturn performance figures.

Members were provided with an overview of the report and it was highlighted that the Service Delivery Plan is broadly the same, with the inclusion of an Action Plan following the HMICFRS Inspection, which will be discharged through the Officers of the Strategic Leadership Team.

Members Resolved that:

The updated Service Delivery Plan 2019/20, be approved.

**12. Occupational Health Medical Services Contract**

Members considered Report CFO/062/19 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the outcome of the Tender Process for the new Occupational Health Medical Services contract, and to seek Authority approval of the award of the contract to Healthwork Limited.

Members were provided with an overview of the report, which highlighted that Healthworks Ltd significantly outperformed the other bidder, as detailed within the scoring matrix attached at Appendix A.

Members Resolved that:

The award of the new Occupational Health Medical Services contract to Healthwork Limited with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 for the period 2020-2025, with an option for further extensions up to 5 years, be approved.

Close

Date of next meeting Thursday, 26 March 2020

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_