

# **MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**30 JANUARY 2024**

## **MINUTES**

**Present:** **Councillors** Brian Kenny (Chair), Sam Gorst, Lynne Thompson, Edna Finneran, Jan Grace, Linda Maloney, Paul Tweed, Doreen Knight and Ed Lamb

**Also Present:** Chief Fire Officer Phil Garrigan  
Director of Finance and Procurement Mike Rea  
Monitoring Officer Ria Groves

### **Apologies of absence were received from:**

1. **Apologies**

There were no apologies received.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest at this meeting.

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

4. **Amazon Digital Marketplace - 1142**

Mike Rea, Director of Finance and Procurement, presented the report which related to a framework agreement with Amazon Business for Digital Marketplace and the benefits of using this.

With regards to tail spend, Mike Rea advised that this related to small values of less than £50.

Councillor Jan Grace asked whether this framework would be reviewed before 2027 and this was confirmed by Mike Rea.

Mike Rea explained that the framework would be available for the Authority to utilise until 2027 and was a call off order with the ability for the Authority to spend up to £300,000. Chief Fire Officer, Phil Garrigan, noted that this framework could stop being used if they were no longer happy with it.

Councillor Ed Lamb wondered whether local suppliers may have been overlooked on the framework and he was advised that the Authority could choose to concentrate spend within a 50-mile area.

**RESOLVED** that the award of a call-off contract with Amazon Business until 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2027 be approved.

## **5. Bonfire Report**

Chief Fire Officer, Phil Garrigan, introduced the report which related to the Bonfire Period 2023. Group Manager, Mark Sopp, took the Members through a presentation, noting that it was a successful bonfire period with a 5.5% reduction in deliberate fires and firework incidents were down by 31.3%. He also added that 76 licenses for the sale of fireworks were issued in that period.

Suzanne Hazza, MFRA Lead for the Bonfire Period, explained that planning for the next bonfire would begin again now and included the organising of tipper trucks, staff volunteers and engaging with the community to be proactive in highlighting any issues early. She emphasised the importance of educating children around the dangers of building bonfires and the consequences.

Councillor Sam Gorst queried whether the reduction in firework incidents was related to the crackdown on the illegal selling of fireworks in neighbouring counties. Mark Sopp advised that there had been a multi strand approach to tackling this issue which included work done in the community to educate school children and preventive work carried out through campaigns.

Councillor Edna Finneran suggested that teenagers may benefit more if they heard the consequences of fireworks from someone their own age rather than an adult. Suzanne Hazza noted that this will be taken on board as they are always looking for ways to improve their approach.

It was acknowledged that the Corporate Communications team played a big part in keeping the community safe through sending out social media messages as part of their 'Do us a Favour' campaign.

Members were advised of two large scale community bonfires that were organised in Ilchester Park and Woodchurch in 2023, stating that MFRA worked with the organisations to ensure that they were controlled. He mentioned that MFRA had a positive influence on these events and no injuries were reported.

Councillor Paul Tweed asked how these events were funded. It was advised by Area Manager, Mark Thomas, that a lot of funding comes from communities and there are dedicated Facebook groups to manage the organisation of such events.

Councillor Sam Gorst raised concerns about the reselling of illegal fireworks in schools and asked how the Authority could mitigate against that risk. He also noted that there were 69 incidents attended by crews in Liverpool and 43 of those had been in his ward in Garston.

Mark Sopp advised that if fireworks are being traded in schools, then education in schools is crucial to eliminate this behaviour from a young age. Members were assured that this issue would be discussed at the multi-agency debrief where the strategy for this year will be formulated.

Members discussed organised displays noting that that there were no organised bonfire events arranged through Wirral or Knowsley Council, however, there had been event in St Helens. It was suggested that there be more of a Fire Authority presence at skip events in the community.

The Chief Fire Officer explained that tipper trucks are used to proactively clear bonfire materials identified by the public or crews. MFRA encourage housing partners such as Liverpool House to manage their areas through the provision of skips to dispose of potential waste. Some districts have chosen not to do this due to the costs associated.

It was acknowledged by Chief Fire Officer that bonfire night is unique for Merseyside compared to other areas, with regards to 'Mischief Night'. This was one of the busiest periods for MFRA and Merseyside Police who would be working proactively in the coming years to reduce the number of incidents.

Councillor Jan Grace asked for further detail on how the Authority ensured retailers were in compliance with legislation relating to the sale of fireworks. Members were assured that the Authority worked with Trading Standards and visited premises across Merseyside and tested suppliers to ensure they were not selling fireworks illegally. Licenses were revoked if retailers did not abide by the legislation.

Councillor Linda Maloney noted that laser lights were being a trend as opposed to traditional fireworks. Suzanne Hazza advised that there was a list of events taking place across Merseyside that crews shared with the public.

Councillor Lynne Thompson commented that the reduction in derelict building fires was encouraging. She mentioned that one derelict building in her ward was being demolished leaving them with a 23 acre site, which could be a risk. The Chief Fire Officer reassured the Members that MFRA were aware of this site and there had been extensive dialogue with the owners with regards to the management.

With regards to joint working with the Police, The Chief Fire Officer advised that information was shared across Services to ensure that the movement of fireworks was limited between counties.

**RESOLVED** that the content of the report and the impact that Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service ('MFRS') staff have had on the delivery of the Bonfire Plan 2023 be noted.

## **6. Award of Contract to Procure NR PPE**

Chief Fire Officer, Phil Garrigan, presented the report which related to the procurement of National Resilience equipment noting the importance of requiring protective equipment to support Firefighter roles. Members were

advised that the Authority undertook this procurement as part of its role as Lead Authority for the Home Office.

Councillor Paul Tweed questioned whether this equipment would be recycled once it reached its 'end of life'. It was advised that the equipment was categorised as for military use and as such would be disposed of so that it could not be reused as there would be no guarantee of its usefulness.

**RESOLVED** that the intention to award a contract for the purchase of ballistic vests to Cooneen Defence Limited be approved.

## **7. Insurance Tender 2024**

Monitoring Officer, Ria Groves, presented the report which related to the Insurance Tender process and outcome for 2024.

Members were advised that the current insurance was due to run out on 31<sup>st</sup> March and as such a tender process was undertaken to secure a new deal for the Authority. It was explained that the insurance had been split into different lots and there had been a number of bids.

Councillor Ed Lamb mentioned that there had been an increase nationally in insurance rates and wondered if this had applied to the Authority. Monitoring Officer, Ria Groves, advised that the insurance market had fluctuated over the last year. Members were advised that the Authority had the option to extend its contract with the insurer and by testing the market, had ensured the best price for the Authority.

**RESOLVED** that the award of Lot 5 (as outlined in paragraph 10) to Zurich Municipal and the increase in the Property and Computer excess from £100 to £1000 be approved.

Close

Date of next meeting Thursday, 4 April 2024