

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PROTECTION

5 FEBRUARY 2026

MINUTES

Present: **Councillors** Jan Grace (Chair), Kieran Murphy, Chris Page, Mike Sullivan and Lynne Thompson. Les Byrom and Lynn O’Keeffe attended as substitutes.

Also present:

Chief Fire Officer	Nick Searle
Deputy Chief Fire Officer	Dave Mottram
Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Ged Sheridan
Director of Finance and Procurement	Mike Rea
Monitoring Officer	Ria Groves

14. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Jeanette Banks, Edna Finneran and Doreen Knight (Councillors Les Byrom and Lynn O’Keeffe attended as substitutes). Apologies were also received from Councillor Lesley Rennie.

15. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest in relation to any item on the agenda.

16. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 4th September 2025 be approved as an accurate record.

17. Post Bonfire Update 2025

Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Ged Sheridan, introduced the report noting the outstanding performance from Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS) and their multi-agency partners regarding Operation Banger.

He drew Members’ attention to paragraphs 3 and 5 of the executive summary on pages 13 and 14 of the agenda. MFRS attended 123 deliberate secondary fires during the 2025 bonfire period which was a reduction of 234 incidents (65%) compared to the previous year. This was advised to be the lowest in recorded history of MFRS.

Members were directed to paragraph 24 on page 19 which showed that the 2025 bonfire period was a success in protecting the communities of Merseyside, the environment and members of the public, whilst keeping staff safe. It was

noted that secondary incidents were reduced by 67.6% across the five local authorities and overall bonfires were reduced by 54.5% across the five local authorities. Members were advised that tipper trucks collected over 80 tonnes of waste, which was 21.5 tonnes higher than the previous year.

Members noted that preparation for the 2026 period had started by looking at the forward planning considerations in paragraph 26, page 20. The focus for the next year for MFRS and partners would be to work more closely at a ward level by utilising street intervention teams, bonfire clearance plans, operational crews involved in high visibility patrols and local arson teams.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer acknowledged that the approach could cause difficulties with some community groups, however, discussions and education sessions would take place earlier to prevent and minimise any tensions. It was advised that the advice given by MFRS, in combination with the position statement on bonfires, would be utilised to shape any submissions for the next year within the relevant safety advisory groups.

Councillor Mike Sullivan commended MFRS on the brilliant job they did over a difficult period, particularly on the Wirral. He raised concerns around the bonfires that took place on the Wirral in St James' and Woodchurch, noting the height and width of these pallet bonfires and he stated that these were set on fire early. He asked what could be done between now and 5th November to stop these fires from taking place again.

It was advised that processes could change this year through debriefs and education. In some areas, products were not put on site until the 5th November which caused a challenge to clear on the day, therefore tactics would change. Community events were seen as a positive for some people without realising the dangers to themselves, community members and nearby buildings and with further education it was hoped further progress could be made in 2026.

It was queried by Councillor Kieran Murphy whether the Authority was pursuing and prosecuting against those people who were building and lighting unlicensed and unregulated bonfires. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised that a different stance was approached during the last year, and he believed that people's views would evolve and change in terms of bonfires. It was noted that Fire, Police, local authorities and all enforcing agencies had a role to play to utilise their powers in a collaborative way, which had been demonstrated and been a success in the last year.

Councillor Les Byrom reassured Members that incidents were going down from scrutinising the statistics.

Councillor Chris Page gave thanks to everybody who worked on this report. He advised that those at Sefton were trying to identify the source of pallets used for bonfires and suggested

Looking at paragraph 26 on page 20, Councillor Lynn O'Keeffe queried whether there was anything she could do with Knowsley to help in terms of tipper funding. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised that this was something that

was noted during the debrief as a plan to do something different next year so this was covered.

Councillor Lynn O'Keeffe acknowledged that the number of incidents had reduced greatly and wondered if the severity of incidents had also reduced and this was confirmed as true, for example, there was a reduction in Violence at Work against crews. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised that the tactics and policy statement and investment in body worn cameras had seen a reduction in the severity which was a positive outcome.

Members' attention was drawn to paragraph 5.2 on page 29 and Councillor Jan Grace queried whether derelict buildings meant specifically old industrial buildings or houses too. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer noted that this was any derelict building. He added that this was due to visibility by staff and highlighting this to agencies to ensure these buildings were secured better.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the contents of the report including pre-bonfire events and performance be noted; and
- b) the forward planning proposals for 2026 be noted.

18. ND2 Procurement - HVP Hose

Chief Fire Officer, Nick Searle, introduced the report noting that the Authority was the Lead Authority for National Resilience and were purchasing equipment on behalf of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

The Chief Fire Officer advised that part of the national capability provided assets for High Volume Pumps (HVP) flood response.

A mini competition was held under the YPO framework for Emergency Response and Rescue Equipment and four suppliers responded to the invitation to tender and two were invited to equipment trials, following which the preferred bidder was selected.

Councillor Kieran Murphy queried whether this money would come out of this current financial year's budget or the next year's budget. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that MHCLG gave the Authority a specific pool of funds to be used to purchase equipment for National Resilience and that money had to be spent in the current financial year.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the contents of the report be noted;
- b) the award of the contract to Mandals AS, at a total cost of £886,580 be approved.

19. ND2 Procurement - Prime Movers

The report was introduced by Chief Fire Officer, Nick Searle.

The Chief Fire Officer acknowledged that National Resilience provided assets for Urban Search And Rescue (USAR) and High Volume Pump (HVP) operations.

The Chief Fire Officer explained that the framework for the procurement of Acquisition and Conversion Heavy Good and Specialist Vehicles was identified as a route to market which met the Authority's requirements. Members noted that a competition was held under the framework and received nine bids for the tender. A full evaluation was undertaken and eStar Truck and Van Limited were identified as the preferred bidder.

Councillor Les Byrom queried whether the Authority would own the vehicles. Monitoring Officer, Ria Groves, advised that as the Authority was the contracted party, they would own the vehicles, with the concept to loan them out to other Fire and Rescue Services long term.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the contents of the report be noted; and
- b) the award of the contract to eStar Truck and Van Limited for 81 Prime Mover vehicles, at a total cost of £13,365,000 be approved.

Close

Date of next meeting Thursday, 30 April 2026