

**To: All Members of the Scrutiny Committee
(and any other Members who may wish to attend)**



**J. Henshaw
LLB (Hons)
Clerk to the Authority**

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Your ref:

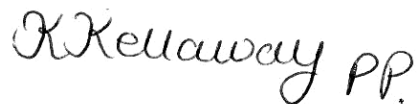
Our ref HP/DM

Date: 25th February 2019

Dear Sir/Madam,

You are invited to attend a meeting of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** to be held at **1.00 pm** on **TUESDAY, 5TH MARCH, 2019** in the Liverpool Suite at Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters, Bridle Road, Bootle, L30 4YD.

Yours faithfully,



Clerk to the Authority

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MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5 MARCH 2019

AGENDA

Members

Anthony Boyle, Independent Person
Peter Brennan
Sharon Connor, Liverpool City Council
Roy Gladden
Janet Grace, Sefton
Andrew Makinson
Steff O'Keeffe
Lisa Preston
Lesley Rennie
Paul Tweed

1. Preliminary Matters

Members are requested to consider the identification of:

- a) Declarations of interest by individual Members in relation to any item of business on the Agenda
- b) Any additional items of business which the Chair has determined should be considered as matters of urgency; and
- c) Items of business which may require 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 (Pages 5 - 12)

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, held on 17th January 2019, are submitted for approval as a correct record and for signature by the Chair.

3. Minutes of the People Scrutiny Rapid Review (Pages 13 - 22)

The Minutes of the People Scrutiny Rapid Review, held on 17th January 2019, are submitted for approval as a correct record and signature by the Chair.

4. Community Risk Management Presentation - Arson Prosecutions

To consider a presentation from the Community Risk Management

Directorates Incident Investigation Team, concerning recent arson prosecutions.

5. Forward Work Plan for Community Risk Management Scrutiny

To consider and identify topics for scrutiny for the “Community Risk Management” Function, to be included within a Forward Work Plan.

If any Members have queries, comments or require additional information relating to any item on the agenda please contact Committee Services and we will endeavour to provide the information you require for the meeting. Of course this does not affect the right of any Member to raise questions in the meeting itself but it may assist Members in their consideration of an item if additional information is available.

Refreshments

Any Members attending on Authority business straight from work or for long periods of time, and require a sandwich, please contact Democratic Services, prior to your arrival, for arrangements to be made.

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF THE

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 JANUARY 2019

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Anthony Boyle, Peter Brennan, Sharon Connor, Roy Gladden, Janet Grace, Andrew Makinson and Paul Tweed

Also Present:

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

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.

Members Resolved that:

- a) There were no declarations of interest made by individual Members in relation to any item of business on the Agenda.
- b) There were no additional items of business declared by the Chair, to be considered as matters of urgency.
- c) There were no items of business requiring the exclusion of the press and public during consideration thereof, due to the possible disclosure of exempt information.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, held on 30th October 2018, were approved as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

3. Verbal Update - Incident Involving Injury to Firefighter

As requested at the previous meeting of the Committee on 30th October 2018, the Assistant Chief Fire Officer provided Members with a verbal update, concerning the outcome of an RTC incident at which a Firefighter was struck by a 3rd Party Vehicle.

Members were informed that the incident occurred on Longmoor Lane; and was as a result of the 3rd Party driving without due care and attention.

They were informed that the female driver was questioned by Police regarding the incident. She admitted the offence of driving with undue care and attention and was given the option of an out of court disposal consisting of attendance at a driver awareness course. She has since attended and completed the course satisfactorily.

The course is a 1 day course which the offender pays for, typically around £150 for this course, and consists of a half day of theory and a half day of practical driving with an ADI.

The alternative to this would have been a criminal prosecution where the sentence would likely be a fine and 3-9 points endorsed on the license.

Members queried whether there are additional measures that MFRA could take to prevent further incidents of a similar nature.

They were informed that our staff followed the relevant procedures; and did everything that they should have done. The individual was turning right; and drove into a coned area. Therefore, the incident occurred as a result of human error.

Members Resolved that:

The content of the verbal update, be noted.

4. Operational Response Presentation

Members were provided with a presentation by James Berry – Area Manager for Operational Response.

The presentation provided Members with a brief overview of the Operational Response Directorate, which consists of Service Delivery, Health and Safety, Operational Assurance; and Time and Resource Management.

Members were advised that the presentation would focus on Service Delivery; and would provide some background information regarding where MFRA have come from and some of the drivers for change, where we are today; and some considerations for the future.

In terms of where MFRA have come from, Members were informed that in 2005, the population of Merseyside was 1.4 million, with an increasing elderly population, high incidence of socio-economic deprivation; high levels of social exclusion and crime; and high levels of deprivation.

With regards to operational response in 2005, MFRA had 1200 Operational Firefighters, a budget of £75 million, 26 fire stations; and 42 fire appliances, in addition, there were 420 Support Staff.

Members were informed that around that time, there were a number of catalysts for change and reform of the Fire Service, including the Fire Services Act 2004, which introduced the National Framework; and the requirement to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan. There was the ODPM White Paper – “Our Fire and Rescue Service” in 2003; and the Bain Report 2002, which built on the requirement for reform and supported the move to locally determined risk based standards, as well as addressing other requirements for change identified by the Audit Commission.

Members were advised that it was important to note that at this stage, there was no austerity.

In addition to these catalysts, there was also a drive to ensure the effective provision of resources, which resulted in aligning risk to life -not property, improving response times; and ensuring that the right resources were in the right place at the right time.

Members were informed that at this time, there were lots of ideas generated, however in hindsight, there was nothing to measure those ideas against. This resulted in resources being removed first and then the impact being evaluated; and it became clear that a different approach was required.

The presentation then showed Members a chart, which detailed the daily demand on operational resources, between 2000 and 2003; and a chart that showed the incident demand curve for 2004/2005 along with appliance availability. This clearly demonstrated that demand fluctuates throughout the day, increasing significantly between 16:00hrs and 20:00hrs, however the number of appliance immediately available, remained the same at all times. Members were advised that this highlighted a requirement to look at things differently; and take a more scientific approach to decision making, rather than solely professional judgement.

Members were advised that MFRA then took the decision to work with a company called Process Evolution on a system called Fire Incident Response Simulator (FIRS). This system enabled resources to be removed in a “virtual” environment, to challenge decision making; and provide reassurance.

Members were also informed that at the time, there were 3 different standards of fire cover, dependent on the perceived risk.

Lots of data was collated from the Incident Recording System (IRS), which captures information electronically from the incident; and was used to populate the FIRS System.

Members were then shown a snapshot of an early model of FIRS, which included all the call-signs/ resources. This highlighted that there was significant periods where resources were not being utilised; and provided officers with an idea of where resources should be allocated.

Members were then shown a brief video, which was produced to highlight MFRA’s work with Process Evolution, which enabled us to take a more scientific

approach to decision making, work smarter; and improve our operational response. The simulation model works based on information from actual incidents attended. It tracks appliances and enables us to identify danger hotspots, mobilise dynamically; and ensure that our resources are in the right place at the right time.

It was reiterated to Members that this was not in itself due to austerity. The changes being implemented to ensure that the organisation was doing what it should be doing.

The presentation then highlighted to Members some of the other assets that were introduced, in an effort to target operational resources more effectively, such as the Motorbike for responding to Automatic Fire Alarms (AFA); and the Small Fires Units, used to respond to small ASB fires.

Other changes that were introduced, included the implementation of different staffing models. A suite of software was utilised to consider alternative staffing models, which resulted in the introduction of Low Level of Activity & Risk (LLAR). This staffing model was cheaper to operate and was introduced at a number of quieter stations. It had minimal impact on response standards, utilised professional, whole-time Firefighters; and ensured that MFRA was resourcing to demand.

Members were informed that in 2008, austerity hit and from that point, there has been a focus on maintaining productivity, including firefighter safety and training; undertaking Community Safety activities, such as Home Fire Safety Checks; and maintaining a challenging response standard. The IRMP 2013-16 introduced a new Pan-Merseyside 10 Minute Response Standard to all life risk incidents, which was a significant change from the previous tiered risk based response standards.

In terms of the number of Fire Appliances available, Members were advised that the numbers only started to reduce in 2008/09 when austerity hit. With regards to the removal of appliances, Members were informed that they were identified using the FIRS system.

The presentation highlighted productivity levels in terms of the number of HFSC's completed. It showed that between 2007/08 and 2009/10 when MFRA had 42 appliances, over 100,000 HFSC's were completed per year. Now, in 2018/19, MFRA have only 26 appliances, however we are still completing high levels of HFSC's – in excess of 50,000.

Some of the key requirements placed on the Authority, were outlined to Members, including the requirements of the Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004; the Civil Contingencies Act 2004; the National Framework 2018; and the HMICFRS.

Members were advised that the use of Process Evolution and the FIRS system, becomes even more important when planning to meet those requirements, as we can no longer afford to make decisions purely based on professional judgement. The use of FIRS and the XIMES staffing system, enables the organisation to ensure that its resource model matches up with the demand

curve, which clearly demonstrates a requirement for more appliances to be available during the day than at night. It ensures that appliances are in the right place at the right time, to ensure that the response standard is maintained.

The presentation then provided Members with an overview of the 10 key station methodology. They were informed that having the 10 key stations covered at all times, ensures that the 10 minute response standard is maintained. Overlaying this with additional appliances, ensures that the attendance of the second appliance is as fast as possible.

Members were advised that the key station methodology was devised using the FIRS system, with over 100,000 incident reports used to populate the system.

In terms of where MFRA is today, Members were advised that there are currently 625 Firefighters, a budget of £59.7 million, 280 Support Staff, 26 appliances available during the day; and 18 available during the night, with a further 8 available for recall within a maximum of 30 minutes.

In terms of Operational Response, there are currently 4 LLAR Stations, 6 day crewing whole-time retained stations (DCWTR), 1 self – managed team working 24 hours and providing National Resilience; and 12 Whole-time 2-2-4 Stations. They were also informed that one of the Station Mergers at Prescott was now complete, whilst the other 2 in St. Helens and Wirral, were ongoing.

The presentation then provided Members with a snapshot of some of the simulations that have been run through the FIRS system, which now contains over 10 years' worth of information. This has enabled MFRA to look at different options and scenarios, to identify what would happen if certain changes were made; and what the potential impact would be. This enables officers to identify what options would have the least impact. It also maintains a record of all options considered, enabling officers to go back and review options at any time; ensuring that the organisation can demonstrate that it has robust internal processes in place; and can clearly demonstrate the rationale behind changes.

Members were informed that the system also enables information from other agencies to be inputted, for example information from NWS regarding EMR incidents, which enable MFRA to identify what the impact of responding to EMR incidents would be.

Importantly, having the ability to make changes in a “virtual” environment, enables officers to identify options that would not be good, to avoid them being implemented.

Members were advised that this has led to the response standard being achieved on 95.3% of occasions; an average response time of 5 minutes 41 seconds, which is the fastest FRS to life risk in the North West and the 5th fastest in the UK; and high levels of productivity maintained during the day. Also, it has provided assurance that the right decisions have been made.

In terms of what the future may look like, Members were advised that officers are working with Process Evolution on a system called HALO, which uses the appliance as the location, not the fire station. The impact of this will be that there

are not as many stand-by moves required, which will have less impact on other activity.

Other areas being considered are the shift start and finish times, considering the demand curve including EMR; different staffing and response models for stations; and surge resourcing, which involves bringing additional appliances on as required.

The Chair of the Committee commented that it is clear there has been a huge transformation; and officers have done a fantastic job.

Comments were made by Members regarding the use of appliances as the location rather than stations, which will be particularly useful given the recent issues and miss-information around Wallasey and Liverpool City Stations. As such, Members requested that regular updates be provided regarding the roll-out of the HALO system.

Members were informed that a meeting had been arranged with Process Evolution for the following month, to consider the implementation of the HALO system. It was suggested that updates be included as an item within the Forward Work Plan for this Committee.

Members also requested that more information be provided regarding prevention activity; and the impact this has had on operational response.

Other areas that Members suggested for further scrutiny, were around the transition of stations to the DCWTR duty system, in particular, Wallasey and Liverpool City Fire Stations.

The Chair of the Committee commented that many Members will have been contacted regarding the changes at Wallasey and Liverpool City; and this will provide Members with the opportunity to raise questions, understand fully why certain decisions were made; and have the correct information available to them.

Further questions were raised by Members regarding the Kings Dock Car Park fire; and whether the software could be used to demonstrate how the service coped; and potentially argue against cuts to MFRA.

Members were advised that issues around managing risk, will be considered as part of the Authority's forthcoming Budget Strategy Day; and will be addressed by the Chief Fire Officer in conjunction with the IRMP. They were informed that in terms of the system, the information is refreshed on a daily basis. The data set is reviewed and updated annually; and the figures re-run to ensure that they are always up to date. This ensures that the best decisions are made to ensure the best possible response is maintained.

Further comments were made by Members with regards to the volume of building works within Liverpool; and the height of some of the buildings, many of which are accommodation for the rising student population. Members asked whether MFRA receive all the relevant information regarding the influx of people into Merseyside.

Members were advised that that information would come under the Protection Function within the Community Risk Management Directorate, however it was confirmed that this information will come into MFRA, through our relationships with the local authorities.

Members were further informed that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 5th March 2019, will be focused on Community Risk Management, therefore it was suggested that this matter be raised during that meeting.

It was confirmed to Members that high rise buildings are a high priority, and have been picked up during the HMICFRS Inspections.

Members were advised that this will also be discussed at the Budget Strategy Day.

The Chair of the Committee suggested that further scrutiny and a demonstration of the FIRS software, would be a good area to undertake a Rapid Review.

It was confirmed to Members that officers would welcome the opportunity to demonstrate the system in more detail; and it was suggested that the review could focus on the decisions around Wallasey and Liverpool City Fire Stations, so Members could see how the decisions were made.

Members Resolved that:

A Rapid Review meeting be arranged to scrutinise the use of FIRS software in the decision making process around the conversion of Wallasey and Liverpool City Fire Stations to the Day Crewing Whole-Time Retained (DCWTR) Duty System.

5. Forward Work Plan for Operational Response Scrutiny

Members considered items for inclusion in a forward work plan, for the Response function.

It was agreed by Members that the 1st Rapid Review for Response Scrutiny will be based on:

“Scrutiny of the use of FIRS software in the decision making process around the conversion of Wallasey and Liverpool City Fire Stations to the Day Crewing Whole-Time Retained (DCWTR) Duty System”

The date and time of the Rapid Review is to be confirmed.

Members resolved that:

The following topics, be included on a Forward Work Plan for future Scrutiny in different areas:

- 1) Monitoring of the implementation of the HALO system (Response).

- 2) Scrutiny of the impact of prevention activity on operational response (CRM)
- 3) Review of information provided by local authorities regarding the influx of particular populations (i.e student population) into Merseyside, particularly given the increase in high rise buildings built to accommodate such groups. (CRM)

Close

Date of next meeting Tuesday, 5 March 2019

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF THE

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – RAPID REVIEW “PEOPLE”

17 JANUARY 2019

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Anthony Boyle, Peter Brennan, Roy Gladden, Janet Grace, Andrew Makinson, Lesley Rennie and Paul Tweed

Also Present:

Apologies of absence were received from: Cllr Sharon Connor, Cllr Steff O’Keeffe and Cllr Lisa Preston

1. People Scrutiny Review - Staff Retention and Succession Planning

Members were provided with a detailed presentation, by the Director of People & Organisational Development – Nick Mernock, delivered in response to the following question, raised by Members:

“How does MFRA ensure current and future retention of staff and effective succession planning to avoid other employers recruiting the excellent staff from MFRA?”

Members were advised that the presentation would consider if MFRA have a problem in terms of staff retention; and if so, what are the challenges. It would then look at what can be done; and how we as an organisation, plan for the future.

The presentation started by looking at staff who have left the service over the last 2 years; and their reason for leaving, broken down by uniformed, non-uniformed and control staff. However, it was highlighted to Members that the figures are a snap shot and numbers will fluctuate year on year, dependant on the challenges being faced.

MFRA Leavers:

Uniformed staff: Members were advised that the majority (111) of individuals leaving MFRA, were those that had reached their normal retirement age. Members were informed of the historical mass recruitment, which led to a large proportion of the operational workforce retiring around the same time, which has created a challenge.

They were informed that there had been 3 medical discharges, 5 medical retirements and 11 resignations.

With regards to the resignations, Members were informed that there was an interesting trend emerging, which would be covered in more detail later in the presentation.

Members were advised that there had been 3 individuals transferring to other FRS's. One was to relocate due to family issues, however the other 2 were officers with specific skills and experience, particularly around Protection, which has caused a small degree of concern.

The presentation highlighted that 1 uniformed employee had unfortunately been dismissed, whilst another had left under the classification of "other", which in this case was a generic conversation between employer and employee, regarding a breakdown in the employment relationship.

Non-uniformed staff: Members were informed that the majority of employees leaving (41) were due to resignations. Unfortunately, 1 individual had died during the period. There was 1 early retirement and 3 medical retirements, 1 medical discharge; and 3 voluntary redundancies.

Members were advised that a voluntary redundancy scheme continued to operate and would be granted where the post of the individual applying could be deleted.

In terms of the remainder of non-uniformed staff leaving, 5 were due to normal retirements, 7 were fixed term contract terminations; and 3 came under the classification of "other", as previously described.

In relation to resignations from non-uniformed staff, Members were advised that they operate within different career parameters than uniformed staff, as there is often less opportunity for progression within MFRA. This combined with a re-vitalised and competitive market for certain skills, has created some challenges for MFRA in terms of staff retention within certain fields.

In terms of Fire Control staff, the presentation highlighted that there had been 6 normal retirements, plus an early retirement, a medical discharge and 2 resignations, which were both due to a change in circumstances.

Members were advised that this is a skilled role, which presents a major learning curve for new employees. They were also informed that the trade unions had raised some concerns regarding staffing numbers within Fire Control, and that they were therefore about to run a recruitment process to address this. However, as there is a great deal of training involved for these roles, MFRA are being more creative in the way that they are recruiting, by making it attractive for individuals to transfer in.

A question was raised regarding the percentages of staff leaving, within each area. Members were advised that officers did not have the figures to hand, but confirmed that these could be circulated following the meeting.

They were informed that out of the 624 operational staff, 135 have left MFRA, 111 of which were through normal retirement. This has created a real challenge

for the organisation, which will be considered and discussed in more detail at the forthcoming Budget Strategy Day.

With regards to non-uniformed staff, it was noted that the majority have transferable skills. This creates a challenge around having a desire to invest in our people, but realising that in doing so, you increase the likelihood of them leaving for a better paid role within another organisation.

With regards to the gender of leavers, Members were informed that 33 were females, whilst 177 were males. They were advised that 4 female uniformed employees have left, which is a concern.

Members were informed that although positive action can be undertaken with uniformed recruitment, to try to encourage applications from females and BAME individuals, there is little scope to do the same with non-uniformed recruitment, as there is greater potential for it to become positive discrimination.

The presentation also showed the number of leavers per age bracket; and highlighted that the vast majority were retirees. Members were informed of the trend within specific younger groups, which sees a lot of movement between roles and organisations. However they were advised that this is not being seen in MFRA at the moment, but there has been some movement between other FRS's, some of which have been overseas.

Members commented that there have been a number of individuals that they have spoken to during Station Visits, who have chosen to transfer into MFRA. They also commented on the excellent calibre of the recruit firefighters, many of whom are highly educated and who have chosen MFRA to be their employer.

It was confirmed that the quality of individuals joining MFRA is fantastic; and that perceptions of the firefighter role are starting to change. With the enhancements to the firefighter role, it is becoming more appealing for females, who are starting to see it more as a community role. Enhancements to the firefighter role, for example the inclusion of EMR and MTFA, may also make the firefighter role appeal to more people; and potentially increase the diversity of applicants in the future.

Members were also informed that there has been a fundamental shift in attitude, from firefighters undertaking the role alongside other employment, to the firefighter role being seen as a career.

Operational Staff Challenges:

With regards to operational challenges, Members were informed that the main challenge is around the age profile of uniformed staff, however the organisation do have a plan to resolve this challenge.

A further potential operational challenge, is around pay, with national firefighter pay negotiations still ongoing.

Members were informed that although operational staff can aspire to senior roles, which are well paid, the base level entry pay for firefighters, is

challenging. For around the first 2 years, firefighters will be in development, which is only paid around £24k per annum. This is particularly low when compared to the base level entry for train drivers, which is around £40k per annum.

Members were advised that several operational staff (particularly female operational staff) have left MFRA for other roles outside the FRS.

Members asked whether they were leaving for specific roles; and were informed that there is major recruitment underway within the railway sector and several of our staff who are relatively new in role, are leaving for better paid roles, such as train driver. It was noted that within FRS', manager level roles are competitive, however the challenges are around entry level roles and retaining staff.

Members were informed that the Day Crewing Whole Time Retained (DCWTR) duty system, to which new recruits are contracted, includes an additional 10% retainer, which enables staff to earn more than the basic level. Also, the contract includes the requirement to respond to MTFA and EMR incidents at a point in the future, but the FBU are restricting their members to working to their role map. MFRA have therefore been asked to withdraw the DCWTR contracts, which we have refused, however we will allow the national dispute to run its course.

Another operational challenge, is around culture; and whether the firefighter role is still considered to be a full career. Members were advised that it would appear to be so, as the vast majority of individuals leaving were due to normal retirements.

Non-Operational Staff Challenges:

With regards to non-operational staff, Members were advised that the main challenge is around career development; and it was noted that for some roles, MFRA just cannot compete with the offer of other organisations and businesses.

Members were advised that MFRA has continued to invest in and re-develop its employees, whilst accepting that some may then leave for a better paid role elsewhere.

A further challenge around non-operational staff, has been around pay rates. An example was provided whereby an employee was offered a role within another organisation for more pay. Given the skills and knowledge of that individual, it would cost MFRA a substantial amount to recruit and train someone else in that role. Therefore the job role was considered and re-aligned, resulting in the individual agreeing to remain an employee of MFRA.

Members were informed that sometimes there is a requirement to be creative, as it is worth retaining skills and experience, for a little extra cost.

Members were shown the matrix utilised for pre-planning, around likelihood of departure verses organisational impact. They were advised that individuals who fall into the low/ low category, tend to be those individuals who are in generic roles. In terms of risk, the greatest area for concern is around individuals who are the main point of knowledge; and who are likely to leave. Therefore, in terms

of a long-term strategy, it is prudent to train other individuals who fall into the middle sections, to provide resilience.

Members were informed that work is undertaken on an annual basis with managers and Directors, to ensure that the gap is minimised. Also, they were advised that for both operational and non-operational staff, there are lots of opportunities for development, for example “acting up”, development workshops, coaching and mentoring and the opportunity to gain different experience. This will enable MFRA to build and support individuals, who will then have the potential to provide future continuity.

Members were informed that officers will continually look to revise and re-vitalise roles, to ensure that they continue to provide personal and job satisfaction. They were advised that this sometimes requires a role to be re-graded, and they try not to close options.

Members were advised that in relation to uniformed staff, one of the key issues has been regarding the movement of staff into management roles. Feedback received was that for many people, the step up from Firefighter to Watch Manager, was considered to be too great. As a result, a number of Crew Manager positions have been re-introduced as development roles, allowing individuals to gain some experience before stepping up to Watch Manager. It was clarified to Members that these positions are not an additional level of management, they are solely for short-term development opportunities.

Members were advised that through consultation, a need was identified for the organisation to assist people moving up into manager roles. They were advised that in terms of Watch Manager A and Watch Manager B roles, the division has now gone in terms of 2 pump stations; and MFRA has therefore been pragmatic and revised how the roles are graded. As a result, more opportunities at Watch Manager B and Station Manager B have been created, in an effort to kick-start interest in promotion.

Members were informed that a further way in which the organisation has been developing its staff, is through diversifying workloads for individuals who have shown an interest in other areas, providing them with opportunity to participate in cross – department working groups; and broaden their skills.

A further consideration for the organisation around retention, has been to continue to review the Pay Strategy. Members were advised that for Green Book staff, it is felt that we are close to breaking point in terms of pay and our ability to retain staff. Therefore as an organisation, we may need to be pragmatic and creative in terms of our pay strategy, in order to try and retain staff.

Questions were raised by Members regarding the re-grading of posts and whether the positions were re-evaluated to ensure that the re-grade is justified.

Members were assured that that is the case and posts are fully re-evaluated.

They were advised that sometimes, the software that is used to evaluate roles, does not take full account of everything that an individual does. In these cases, the role will be discussed fully and the role re-evaluated on that basis. Members were further advised that many organisations choose to use two systems together, as no one system is ever 100% accurate.

Further questions were raised by Members regarding specific groups of staff that are highly qualified, trained and experienced; and what we are doing to ensure those staff are retained within MFRA.

Reassurance was provided to Members regarding those roles. They were also informed that there have been a number of “development” operational roles, however we are now in a position where in some roles, there are not enough people who are permanent. They were advised that anyone who has been temporary in a role for over 2 years should be made permanent; and as such, they hope to address some of those issues in the near future.

Operational Recruitment:

With regards to the Firefighter challenge, Members were informed that operational recruitment is a key issue. They were advised that there will be at least 3 recruit courses a year consisting of 20 individuals, and that we will be recruiting on a constant basis.

They were also informed of the “Have a Go” days that are being run, which enable individuals to have a go of the different elements of the process/ role. The “Have a Go” days are open to female and BAME applicants, who have fallen out of previous recruitment processes at some point; and provide them with an opportunity to try different elements and receive additional support. This approach means we are recycling some of those applicants, which have expressed an interest in working for MFRA. Members were informed that on the current recruit course, there are 7 individuals who have previously attended a “Have a Go” day.

Members were informed that we have transferred in a number of staff from other FRS's, in order to meet the challenge around Firefighter numbers.

In addition, MFRA are looking to re-employ as Watch Managers, a few individuals who have recently retired, on a short term basis, providing they still meet the physical requirements.

Members were advised that the individuals will be given a short term contract; and will be utilised to plug-gaps where required.

It was clarified to Members that the individuals combined pension and pay amount will not be able to exceed the amount they earned before they retired; and they will only be used when needed for a short period of time.

They were also advised that during the 12 to 18 month transition period, Station Managers have; and will be riding as Watch Managers where required, to provide support.

It was highlighted to Members that the organisation will continue to commit to diversity and undertake positive action, with regards to recruitment.

Succession Planning/ Promotion:

In relation to the challenges around promotion, particularly of individuals from under-represented groups, Members were advised that it is a challenge that the organisation is on top of; and it has been identified within the People Strategy.

They were informed that managers are looking to identify individuals early on who have the potential to progress, as in the past, we have been hindered by the organisational culture and watch climate which has made people feel that they cannot progress until they have several years of experience.

It was highlighted to Members that the Appraisal mechanism is now much stronger, with managers now having conversations with their staff around aspirations, to break down barriers and identify future leaders early on. Where such individuals are identified, there is a range of support and development opportunities available, such as fast track development programmes, coaching and mentoring; and temporary opportunities.

Members were advised that the issues experienced here around promotion, are the same issues experienced nationally. However we are starting to move in the right direction, with more interest being expressed. They were advised that as an organisation, we have a clear view of where we are heading, with a number of working groups established, in addition to a number of vacancies and opportunities for progression to Watch Manager and Station Manager level.

Members asked whether in some cases, the reason why individuals were reluctant to progress, was due to a lack of confidence and not a lack of ability; and if so, what we could do as an organisation to address that.

Further comments were made suggesting that some individuals, may not have the desire to progress; and wouldn't want to feel pressurised into doing so, whilst others may not have thought about progression until it was discussed with them.

The presentation provided Members with some figures around the number and percentage of individuals who have been promoted within the last 2 years, by ethnicity, gender; and age.

Members were informed that the major challenge in terms of progression is around encouraging those from BAME backgrounds and females to seek promotion. They were informed that officers are wholly aware of the situation, however it is hoped that those individuals recruited over the past few years, may be more likely to seek progression.

Members were advised that MFRA have a strong brand and are considered to be an employer of choice. MFRA also has a People Strategy, which aims to address these challenges.

Challenges – Specific Roles/ Skills:

The presentation also considered if there were any specific roles to which MFRA have had difficulty recruiting into.

Members were advised that difficulties have been experienced around some IT and professional Finance roles, which are likely to be due to a more competitive reward market for these skills.

With regards to uniformed staff, Members were advised that there is still substantial interest, with over 1,400 applicants each time we advertise. They were also informed that there are people who have applied on numerous occasions.

In terms of trends in loss of staff to other organisations, Members were informed that there have been 2 key areas identified.

One is the loss of several staff to roles within the railway sector, as discussed previously, the other is the loss of a few Protection staff to other organisations or FRS's, who are prepared to offer a higher grade, or a permanent role.

Comments were made by Members regarding the quality of training provided during the firefighter recruit course; and the different elements and extent of knowledge required to undertake the role.

A further question was raised by Members relating to employees who have chosen to leave the organisation; and if any of those individuals have sought to return to MFRA.

Members were informed that some of those who left to work overseas, requested to return to MFRA once their contracts overseas had been terminated, however they were advised that they would have to go through the recruitment process again.

However, most individuals who leave MFRA, tend to do so for specific reasons; and it is very seldom that people chose to leave as the role is not for them.

Conclusion:

Members considered the content of the presentation provided; and confirmed that it covered all of the questions in detail and provided them with assurance regarding staff retention and succession planning.

Members Resolved that:

The content of the presentation, be noted.

Close

Date of next meeting Date Not Specified

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