

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF THE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 MAY 2019

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Peter Brennan, Sharon Connor, Roy Gladden, Janet Grace, Andrew Makinson, Lisa Preston, Lesley Rennie and Paul Tweed

Also Present:

Apologies of absence were received from: Anthony Boyle and Cllr Steff O'Keeffe

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 5th March 2019, were approved as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

3. Minutes of the Operational Scrutiny Rapid Review

The Minutes of the Operational Scrutiny Rapid Review, held on 5th March 2019, were approved as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

4. Presentation - Overview of the Operational Preparedness Directorate

Members were provided with a presentation by the Area Manager for Operational Preparedness, concerning an overview of the Directorate.

The presentation highlighted the structure of the Directorate and where it contributes to the strategic aims of the organisation. It also highlighted the range of work undertaken within the Directorate, in collaboration with key partners, such as Merseyside Police and North West Ambulance Service.

Members were informed that with regards to collaboration, the Joint Control Centre is a great example of co-location, whilst JESIP demonstrates how MFRA works collaboratively with other blue light responders on the ground, utilising joint working principles and a joint understanding of risk.

In terms of NWAS, Members were advised that sometimes collaboration can be more difficult to achieve, due to NWAS having a regional footprint, whereas Merseyside Police share the same County boundaries.

The presentation provided Members with a brief overview of each of the departments within the Operational Preparedness Directorate.

In terms of National Resilience, it highlighted some of the key assets, including Urban Search & Rescue, International Search & Rescue, High Volume Pumps and the canine provision.

With regards to the Marine Rescue Team, Members were informed that it is currently part funded by Merseytravel and Liverpool John Lennon Airport; and is one of the busiest water rescue stations in the Country.

In terms of the Training & Development Academy (TDA), Members were advised that it is a facility that everyone within the organisation uses. Members were advised that the TDA facilitates a wide range of training, including risk critical training for operational crews, command and control training, technical rescue training; and commercial training, which generates income.

In addition, the TDA co-ordinate multi-agency training, such as planning for events; and also the training for our new recruit firefighters, which is extremely complex in terms of the logistics and planning.

Members were further informed that the planned re-development of the TDA, will produce a facility that is fit for a modern FRS.

The presentation highlighted the role of the Operational Planning Department, which consists of a mix of operational and non-operational staff, who work closely with the Police and other agencies. The Department deals with operational response plans, Standard Operating Procedures, Operational Information, COMAH plans, Event Planning; and the local resilience forum.

The Operational Intelligence Team, encompasses Business Continuity, Site Specific Risk Information (SSRI's) and the Water and Hydrant section. Members were advised that there is also a team within the Directorate, which considers the National Operational Guidance (NOG) and ensures that our own SOP's align with the NOG; and undertake Strategic Gap Analysis.

Members were informed that another key Department which sits within the Operational Preparedness Directorate, is Fire Control, which are located within the Joint Control Centre. The team have responsibility for emergency call handling and dispatch and require a high level of training. They ensure that incident logs are maintained; and have also recently taken over responsibility for National Resilience Control.

A further key Department that was highlighted to Members, was Operational Equipment and Stores. They were informed that this Department have responsibility for undertaking research and development with regards to equipment, asset refresh, repairing and maintaining equipment including breathing apparatus, operational PPE, uniforms; and consumable items. In addition, they hold the central repository for document archive; and manage the logistics of the organisation.

The final Department highlighted within the presentation, was Transport and Workshops, who have responsibility for the design and procurement of equipment, fleet management, maintenance of vehicles and assets; and providing technical support.

The presentation then highlighted the actions contained within the IRMP, for which Operational Preparedness have responsibility, including the new IRMP actions which are currently out for consultation. These include: - enhancing our response to terrorist attacks, re-distributing specialist appliances, exploring drone capability, exploring 999 eye; and improved sharing of risk information cross-border.

Comments were made by Members regarding some concerns raised during recent visits, with regards to the rates of pay compared to the private sector, for some of our workshops staff.

Members were advised that the concerns are understood and that the organisation has experienced some difficulty with regards to recruitment into certain roles and staff retention, which is currently being considered.

Members Resolved that:

The content of the report be noted.

5. Presentation - Marine Rescue Unit Assets

Members were provided with a presentation by Group Manager Gary Oakford, regarding Marine Rescue Unit assets.

GM Oakford introduced himself, and informed Members that he is a Group Manager within the Operational Preparedness Directorate, with responsibility for Operational Training, the Search & Rescue Team (SRT) and the Marine Rescue Unit (MRU).

Members were advised that following the Budget Strategy Day in 2018, a meeting took place to consider asset refresh and to discuss the procurement of two new vessels for the MRU. It was re-iterated to Members that the MRU is one of the busiest water rescue stations in the country; and that it undertakes lifesaving activity, including actual rescues; and crisis calls from extremely vulnerable individuals.

Members were informed that the RNLI are able to sell their end of life boats to other agencies, therefore as an alternative to purchasing new vessels at significant cost, officers entered into discussions with the RNLI regarding the possibility of purchasing two of their vessels. They were informed that with support from internal colleagues, an agreement was reached with RNLI that was appropriate for all parties; and MFRA have now taken possession of two Atlantic 75 vessels.

The presentation explained to Members that the two vessels purchased are approximately 12 years old, however they are state of the art vessels, which have been extremely well maintained, have not been kept in the water; and therefore have very minimal damage.

Members were advised of progress to date. The boats arrived with MFRA on 19th March 2019, with familiarisation training delivered by RNLI staff during the first week. Members were informed that in order to extend the life of the vessels, a Versa Dock has been installed, which will enable the boats to be stored out of the water, to avoid deterioration. They were also informed that the boats have been installed with Airwaves; and the official launch of the vessels will take place on 2nd June 2019, as part of the Liverpool River Festival.

In terms of training and familiarisation, Members were advised that the familiarisation training and instruction on operating the boats and all the equipment; and instruction on maintenance of the boats, has been provided by the RNLI. They were also advised that MRU staff have been trained on RNLI's Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's); and that broadly, RNLI's Policies and Procedures for safe working on the river, have all been adopted.

In addition to the vessels, Members were informed that a range of additional equipment and spare parts, were also included in the purchase; and RNLI have expressed a willingness to allow MFRA to utilise the RNLI on line competency framework.

Further information was provided to Members around the installation of a Versa Dock on the pontoon. This will ensure that the vessels are not in the water all the time, which will mean less wear and tear and maintenance; and the life of the boats being extended.

With regards to finance, Members were advised that the budget for the purchase of the rescue boats was £475k. However the purchase costs of the RNLI Boats, was £105k, which includes the boats, trailers and other additional equipment. Members were informed that the balance of £370k has moved into the 2021/22 Capital Programme. They were also informed that the purchase of the new boats through the RNLI, allows MFRA to terminate the current

maintenance contract, which when combined with the potential capital receipts for the existing boats, could mean that the new boats come at no additional cost.

In terms of the launch date, Members were informed that MFRA had been given a prime slot as part of the River Festival on the 2nd June 2019, with the boats being launched from the pontoon outside of the Tate Gallery. Members were also informed that local schools had been engaged with regards to the naming of the vessels.

In terms of interoperability, Members were informed that it is planned to undertake joint training with the RNLI. Also, RNLI's SOP's have been adopted, which has negated the requirement to create bespoke SPA's. Other benefits include fleet resilience, the certification of vessels against the Rescue Boat Code; and the fact that it buys MFRA some time to consider future procurement options.

The presentation also highlighted to Members, the emerging landscape in terms of the River Mersey; and some emerging risks, including growth in terms of additional buildings on both sides of the Mersey, a new ferry terminal; and a cruise liner terminal, which will all see a significant increase in the amount of commercial and leisure traffic around the River Mersey. It will also lead to an increase in the number of people living close to the water, which will in turn, increase risk. Members were also informed that these changes will stimulate further discussion with partners, around the funding of the MRU.

Members were then advised of the potential for MFRA to deliver some training for RNLI in the future; and it is hoped that a suitable reciprocal arrangement can be agreed.

The Chair then advised that the meeting had become inquorate; and as a result, no decisions could now be made.

The meeting therefore ended at 1:40pm.

6. Forward Work Plan for Operational Preparedness Scrutiny

Item deferred to the next meeting.

Close

Date of next meeting Thursday, 12 September 2019