

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	AUTHORITY		
DATE:	23 FEBRUARY 2017	REPORT NO:	CFO/012/17
PRESENTING OFFICER	DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	DEB APPLETON	REPORT AUTHOR:	JACKIE SUTTON
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT GROUP		
TITLE OF REPORT:	IRMP 2017-20 POST CONSULTATION		

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Purpose of Report

1. To request that Members consider the outcomes of public consultation on the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2017-20 and to seek approval for the publication of the final post-consultation version.

Recommendation

2. That Members;
 - a. Consider whether the responses to consultation have been adequately considered and are reflected within the Integrated Risk Management Plan 2017/20, where appropriate.
 - b. Note that this IRMP continues to reflect the challenging budget position facing the Authority.
 - c. Reaffirm their commitment to ensuring that the impact of the changes on the communities of Merseyside should be minimised and firefighter safety maximised.
 - d. Note that there are areas of the IRMP that will have direct impact upon our staff. In line with all staffing matters the IRMP has been the subject of additional staff consultation/negotiation.

- e. Note that the proposals within this IRMP have been subject to extensive public consultation. The outcomes of these consultations have been attached as appendices to this report.
- f. Approve the IRMP 2017/20 for publication on 1st April 2017.

Introduction and Background

3. It is a statutory requirement of the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2012 to produce an IRMP. This IRMP has been written to ensure compliance with this National Framework.
4. Merseyside FRA's IRMP is a medium term plan that evaluates progress made as a result of previous IRMP's and captures future aspirations and the strategic direction for the Authority in order to deliver its Mission: Safer, Stronger Communities; Safe Effective Firefighters.
5. Members will be aware that the published IRMP Supplement 2015/17 is still current until 1st April 2017.
6. This IRMP deals in a strategic way with the implications of the budget cuts on the provision of preparedness, response and community risk management services including changes to the way fire stations are staffed.
7. Subject to approval of the IRMP 2017/20 the Chief Fire Officer will exercise his full delegated responsibility in the management of any changes resulting from IRMP 2017/20.
8. Future reports to the Authority will contain the detail on any such changes resulting from the IRMP.

Consultation

9. Since the draft IRMP was approved at Authority on 20th October 2016 a twelve week consultation process has taken place and the outcomes from this are summarised below and reported within Appendix 2 to 11.
10. Amendments made as a result of the consultations are included at Appendix 10.
11. The consultation process included the following:
 - a) Publication of the draft IRMP 2017-20 on the Merseyfire website
 - b) Publicity regarding the launch of the consultation process was published on the Authority website, Portal, Facebook and Twitter pages
 - c) Three public consultation forums were held
 - d) Distribution of the IRMP to over 100 strategic partners and other interested parties

- e) Meetings with staff Representative Bodies – Fire Brigades Union, Fire Officers Association, UNISON and UNITE.
- f) Principal Officer briefings to staff
- g) An on line questionnaire on our website for the public and staff

Public Forum

12. Opinion Research Services (ORS) were commissioned to facilitate three all-Merseyside forums, at Birkenhead, Bootle and Netherton and Belle Vale Fire Stations, to consider the Authority's draft IRMP. ORS's role was to recruit and facilitate the meeting and report outcomes. ORS worked with MFRA to prepare stimulus material for the meeting with the fullest possible information for participants.
13. MFRA has had an extensive programme of 'engagement' with residents for a number of years and, in this context, ORS has regularly facilitated district-based and all-Merseyside forums. Within this on-going framework, MFRA has conducted 'listening and engagement' and 'formal consultation' meetings on a regular cycle.
14. The consultation forums followed five earlier district 'listening and engagement' meetings that considered the priorities for MFRA in the context of planning for the future with a much reduced budget due to public expenditure reductions. These priorities were discussed and then ranked in order of importance to the public. The seven priorities included speed of response, which the public ranked as the main priority for MFRA when planning, also safety of staff and public, community focussed services and meeting demand for services. Full details can be found on page 31 of the IRMP.
15. Having taken account of those earlier meetings the forum considered the proposals in the draft IRMP 2017-20. The full ORS Consultation Forum Report can be found at Appendix 2.
16. Although there have been minor changes made to the IRMP as a result of the consultation process, this has not materially affected the proposals contained within the Plan. Changes can be found in Appendix 10.
17. In general, public consultation on the IRMP was supportive of the proposals; understanding that they were driven by necessity due to the budget cuts. The outcomes from the consultation would suggest that the public were reassured that the Authority, whilst not wanting to make many of the proposed changes, had carefully considered the associated risk to our communities and were satisfied that MFRA would strive to keep any impact on service delivery to a minimum.

On-line Questionnaire

18. An on-line questionnaire was available on the MFRS website (Appendix 3). The full results report is attached at Appendix 4. The questionnaire was divided into the Functional proposals. The majority of respondents (69.57%) felt the Response proposals were very reasonable and 26.09% felt they were fairly reasonable. Preparedness proposals were considered very reasonable by 69.57% of respondents and 69.57% thought the Prevention and Protection proposals were very reasonable. Comments included:

'I particularly enjoyed the way the IRMP was presented and written. The contents page set the tone, simplistic but 'to the point'. Not to be underestimated! As a serving member of MFRS I can appreciate that any member of the public reading this would be able to follow and fully comprehend actions being considered/implemented by MFRS.'

'The Plan sets out the risks faced by the Service and how the organisation is planning to tailor response, protection and prevention arrangements to best meet the local requirements. The plan identifies how it aims to achieve this whilst living within its means'

Staff Representative Bodies

19. Consultation with representative bodies generally accepted that while some of the changes were not welcome, decisions made by the Authority were made with the safety of staff and the people of Merseyside in mind. UNISON asked for staff to be reminded of the consultation and a further reminder that the IRMP was out to consultation was put on Message of the Day on the Portal. UNISON concluded by saying *"the IRMP has been looked at carefully by UNISON who believe it is a comprehensive document; our queries were addressed by Deb Appleton when we met"*.
20. UNITE indicated that they had no comments.
21. The loss of operational roles is a major concern for FOA. They stated in their response that while understanding the rationale they are of the view that there are times when the Service is stretched and of particular concern going forward will be the flexi duty officer workload and the ability of members who hold secondary retained contracts to support response solutions. They committed to working closely with management to ensure solutions to these concerns are addressed (attached as Appendix 8).
22. In a comprehensive response (attached as Appendix 9) the Fire Brigades Union was supportive of the position the Authority finds itself in with regards to continued funding cuts and welcomed improved industrial relations. Their response did however include opinions on matters related to Day Crewing, the Unwanted Fire Signals Strategy, roll out to all stations of Emergency Medical Response at the end of the trial in February and adoption of Safe and Well visits without Clinical Commissioning Groups committing to commission delivery of these enhanced visits and removing resilience contracts - to use the

money to save support staff posts. Members may find the following comments useful in relation to some of the key areas referred to in the submission.

Operational Response

23. It is agreed that the Authority and FBU is enjoying positive and improved industrial relations and we also hope and anticipate that this will continue. In relation to resilience contracts; we welcome the FBU's comment that industrial action is a remote risk, however unfortunately whilst there still remains any risk, the Authority cannot support removing the assurance that resilience contracts offer in regard to ensuring our local and national commitments to providing emergency response during periods of industrial action.
24. We note the FBU's position on Day Crewing systems and also believe that the positive approaches we have undertaken through local agreements with regard to other non – grey book duty systems will continue as we work through the challenges of austerity.
25. With reference to the comments relating to Emergency Medical Response; positive dialogue continues with the Representative Bodies locally. The Service is committed to the national trial.
26. The FBU requested that consideration be given to the use of an independent examiner and a written assessment/examination, before a practical command and control/command competence assessment, to give under pinning knowledge before promotion.
27. It will be a mandatory requirement from March 2017 for individuals who are seeking career progression to Watch Manager to have or to be working towards passes in the following Institution of Fire Engineers Examinations:

Level 3 Diploma:

- Unit 1 Fire Engineering Science
- Unit 2 Fire Safety
- Unit 6 Operations & Incident Command

The Service have been communicating this for a number of years when accepting applications for IFE and also when communicating with staff about the Gateway process.

For those individuals who have been substantively promoted in the last 18 months to 2 years have been advised that there is an expectation that they will achieve passes in the above mentioned examinations.

Protection

28. In the 'Foreword' section the FBU define Protection in relation to stopping fires occurring and whilst relevant, the main focus of the relevant legislation is placed upon mitigating the effects of fire. The FBU statement that Automatic

Fire Detection (AFD) is a requirement under legislation is incorrect, though it is one means of meeting regulatory responsibilities to ensure early warning in the event of fire. It is important for Members and Representative bodies to be aware that Protection plays a key role in enhancing the safety and effectiveness of operational firefighters (for example, through consultation on Building and Planning applications for the fire safety elements of Building Regulations and facilities for firefighting).

29. The FBU expresses concerns that the Authority has not adopted the CFOA guidance for the reduction of false alarms and unwanted fire signals. The Authority values national guidance from CFOA where this is appropriate to the needs of the Authority and as a principle would always seek to adopt a national consistent approach, but only if this is in the interests of the Authority's Mission (Safer, Stronger Communities; Safe, Effective Firefighters). In respect of the CFOA guidance for the Reduction of False Alarms & Unwanted Fire Signals the Authority is of the opinion that this is not in these interests.
30. The reduction of Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS) is a priority for the Authority for the following reasons:
 - a. The continual rise in the number of automatic fire alarms (AFA) systems being installed and the number of AFA systems becoming less reliable through ageing means that the number of false alarm AFA actuations will continue to rise;
 - b. The loss of operational response capacity combined with the anticipated continual rise in false alarms made a continued emergency response to every actuation unsustainable and unnecessary.
 - c. The Authority determined (when implementing the revised AFA protocol in 2012) that implementation of the CFOA Guidance toolbox would be ineffective in making significant reductions in UwFS, and given the points above is therefore contrary to the needs of achieving the Authority's Mission.
31. The risk assessment conducted for the Authority AFA Response protocol determines that when the risks are considered in aggregate, the risk associated with a continued operational response to all AFA actuations is greater than the risk associated with the adoption of the protocol to reduce responses to unconfirmed AFA actuations.
32. The Authority recognises the value of effective AFD systems, their importance in the management of fire risk across the built environment and consequently their effectiveness in providing early warning of fire. New technologies such as systems with double-knock capability are improving in reliability and therefore any premises with an effective double-knock system are automatically exempt from the Service's response protocol. On the vast majority of occasions, in event of a fire occurring the Service receives a back-up call (and frequently

several back-up calls) from members of the public, therefore the risk of a real fire not receiving a response is minimal

Prevention and incident numbers

33. The FBU's support for the benefits of Safe and Well Visits is welcomed and their concerns in relation to the implications of not securing additional funding are noted. The Authority will explore the potential for additional funding during the pilot phase of this project.
34. The FBU response suggested that the IRMP should make reference to the fact that fire deaths have risen in recent years. This was also raised at the consultation meeting with the FBU and the increase in fatalities is now referred to on page 18 of the IRMP:

"The volume of primary fires MFRS attend, as illustrated on the map below, show we have the 5th largest volume of the 46 English FRS's. However when this data is combined with population statistics we attend more primary fires per 1,000 population than any other English Fire and Rescue Service, according to the most recent published National Data from the Home Office. This is despite our ongoing preventative work.

There are recognised links between the numbers of fires and levels of deprivation experienced within the FRS area. Sadly fire deaths increased in 2016/17 to 16 which is the highest number recorded since 2001/02.

Therefore the challenge that we face should not be underestimated."

35. A hyperlink to the Fatal Fires report 2006/07-2015/16 is included on page 20.

Consultation with Partners

36. The draft IRMP was widely distributed among partners who were invited to complete the survey on the MFRA website. A list of partners the document was distributed to is attached as Appendix 5. No specific changes were requested.
37. Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service Chief Fire Officer commented in his response (Appendix 6) :

'Overall, we are supportive of the Plan and I can see that a great deal of time and resources have been spent developing the document and setting out the operational and sub-regional context. As a result the Service looks well-placed to tackle the many challenges it is facing.'

Equality and Diversity Implications

38. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the IRMP and is attached as Appendix 11.

39. An Equality Impact Assessment will also be completed for actions within the plan prior to implementation.
40. The public forums, when considering the proposals presented to them, were reminded to consider the nine protected characteristics, plus socio-economic disadvantage which the Authority also include.
41. The information provided in the EIA explains the ways in which different protected groups may be affected by the aims and objectives set out in the IRMP, specifically the proposed changes to service as a result of the significant reduction in funding by the government. It is believed that the proposals that are contained within the IRMP offer the best service provision in the circumstances.

Staff Implications

13. It should be noted in order to minimise the impact on services to the community and to ensure firefighter safety the Authority recognises that, as a result of ongoing capacity reductions, it is essential that there are changes to the way in which the Authority work. The IRMP Members are approving makes reference to specific issues that will have significant impact on staff. In line with all staffing matters these are the subject of additional staff consultation/negotiation prior to any implementation. These are:

- Loss of support staff roles
- Reduction of firefighters posts
- Collaboration with partner blue light services

The Strategic Management Group delivered a presentation to all staff on proposals contained in the IRMP and potential collaboration opportunities identified by Deloitte following their report in November 2016.

In line with normal Authority management arrangements and the specific budget resolution of the Authority the Authority will note that the Chief Fire Officer has full delegated responsibility for completing those consultations/ negotiations and managing the implementation. To deliver the savings and efficiencies in a timely manner and in a way that minimises risk.

It is recognised that that some of the changes proposed may be challenging for staff. This may mean that agreement may not be reached with all representative bodies and the CFO will need to consider the appropriateness of the resolution processes as set out in the grey book and indeed the full range of processes available to the Authority as employer in order to achieve the required outcome.

The outcomes from the detailed consultations on all these matters will be reported back to the Authority at a later date in line with normal practice.

Legal Implications

42. MFRA continues to discharge its statutory duties under the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2012 by the actions detailed in this report and attached appendices.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

43. The full financial implications were established during the development of the IRMP proposals which have been designed to meet the cuts in Government Grant. No alternative proposals were suggested during the consultation period that would still allow the Authority to meet their obligation to set a balanced budget.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

44. This document details the strategic approach to risk management, encompassing what has been done to manage risk and what will be done in the coming two years.

Contribution to Our Mission: *Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Firefighters*

45. The IRMP is the key document by which Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority manage its resources with full consideration of the impact on risk to life for the people of Merseyside. This document details the actions we intend to take to achieve our Mission.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CFOA	Chief Fire Officers Association
FBU	Fire Brigades Union
IRMP	Integrated Risk Management Plan
MFRA	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
MFRS	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service
ORS	Opinion Research Services

