

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	FULL AUTHORITY		
DATE:	23RD FEBRUARY 2017	REPORT NO:	CFO/017/17
PRESENTING OFFICER	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER	REPORT AUTHOR:	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT GROUP		
TITLE OF REPORT:	SPEECH OF THE POLICING AND FIRE MINISTER FOLLOWING THE POLICING AND CRIME ACT RECEIVING ROYAL ACCENT		

APPENDICES:	APPENDIX A	SPEECH OF THE POLICING AND FIRE MINISTER 7TH FEBRUARY
	APPENDIX B	WORKFORCE AND EMPLOYMENT DATA

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the speech delivered by the Policing and Fire Minister on 7th February on Fire Reform and to set out for Members the position of the Authority against the expectations as articulated by the Minister.

Recommendation

2. That Members note the contents of this report.

Introduction and Background

3. On 7th February the Policing and Fire Minister delivered a speech to Chief Fire Officers and Authority Chairs at an event hosted by the Think Tank Reform. The speech coincided with the Policing and Crime Act 2017 receiving Royal Assent.
4. A full transcript of the speech is appended to this report at Appendix A.
5. The key themes within the Ministers speech were Accountability and Transparency, Efficiency and Collaboration and Workforce Reform.

Accountability and Transparency

6. The Minister set out his intentions to introduce a FRS Inspectorate, stating that it 'will be empowered to determine how effective each service is in relation to its ability to prevent and respond to incidents; whether the service provides value for

money; whether the service understands its current demands and where the future risks lie; and its leadership, training, diversity, values and culture’.

7. The Minister also stated that the Inspectorate would undertake thematic inspections which will in the first instance focus on Diversity, Collaboration and Flexible Deployment.
8. The Authority is well placed against all three areas.
9. Members will be aware that the significant financial challenges faced by the Authority has seriously limited the ability to change the make-up of the workforce through recruitment. That said the make-up of the Service is 19.01% female firefighters (against an England baseline of 14.56%) and 3.89% BME firefighters (against a local BME population of 5.49%). Whilst there is still much work to be done, the intensive recruitment campaign on which the Authority will embark over the next decade will undoubtedly see an improvement in these figures; indeed 4 (25%) of the 16 latest Trainee Firefighter cohort are female. Members will also recall that MFRA was recognised by the Asian Fire Services Association in 2016 for its work on positive action.
10. A summary of the Authority position in relation to the make-up of the Service is appended to this report at Appendix B.
11. The Authority can demonstrate extensive and long standing evidence of collaboration delivered through the Blue Light Collaboration Programme Board ranging from the Joint Control Centre (JCC), Emergency Medical Response (EMR) with NWS to the co-location of NWS HART with the Search and Rescue Team at Croxteth. Progress against all areas is reported to the Police and Fire Collaboration Committee which is attended by the PCC, Deputy PCC, Chief Constable and the Chair and Vice Chairs of the Authority. Members should note that the authority embarked on many of the collaborative initiatives long before a statutory duty to do so was proposed.
12. The Authority can also demonstrate extensive evidence of Flexible Deployment. By way of example the Authority was the first in the Country to introduce the LLAR duty system. Firefighters on Merseyside operate a range of innovative duty systems ranging from 24 hour shifts with wholtime retained cover to wholtime days and night time retained cover. At the time of writing 306 Firefighters on Merseyside also undertake retained duties which provide significant resilience within the operational response model.

Efficiency and Collaboration

13. This element of the speech focused on Procurement and the recent ‘Basket of Goods’ exercise.
14. The Authority can demonstrate strong performance in driving out value for money through procurement. This was borne out by the good ‘Basket of Goods’ results published in 2016. Recent examples of value for money include :

- The 2016 North West procurement exercise for flash hoods. This project was led by Merseyside FRA and resulted in a unit cost reduction of over 9%.
- The Authority has let a new regional contract for the provision of dry suits. This has delivered unit cost savings of 9% for the North West FRAs.
- The Authority has let a collaborative contract for the Employee Assistance Programme. This has delivered a cost reduction of 17% for the participating FRAs.

15. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service have been recognised in the Emergency Services Collaboration Working Group (ESCWG) National Overview 2016 (link below), for a number of our current collaborative projects, plans and initiatives which are ongoing across Merseyside.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/policing-and-crime-bill-emergency-services-collaboration>

16. Members should note that the Policing and Crime Act sets out a number of options for Governance changes to FRAs. These options are as follows;

- The Representation Model – this is where a PCC is co-opted on to an FRA as a voting member
- The Governance Model – Under this model, the existing FRA will be abolished and its functions transferred to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC), along with fire and rescue personnel, property, rights and liabilities. The PFCC will be the employer of all fire and rescue staff, but in practice would be expected to put in place a chief fire officer (or equivalent) with operational responsibility for the fire and rescue service. The chief constable of the police force for the area will continue to employ all police staff. The distinction between operational policing and fire-fighting will be maintained with the law preventing a full-time police officer from being a fire-fighter remaining in place.
- The Single Employer Model – Under this model, the PFCC would appoint a chief constable (who may be operationally known as the “chief officer”) as the head of the both the police and fire and rescue service and who would employ both police and fire personnel. In practice, the chief officer may appoint a senior fire officer to lead fire operations and a deputy chief constable to lead police operations, under their command. The chief officer would be accountable to the PFCC for fire and policing.

17. Under the Cities and Local Government Devolution Action the Metro Mayor can take on the responsibility of the PCC and FRA under a Governance or Single Employer Model.

Workforce Reform

18. The Minister announced that he was establishing a Professional Standards Body which will build a ‘comprehensive professional standards framework’ for the Service.

19. The Minister then covered workforce culture making reference to the Thomas Review making reference again to the composition of the workforce. The Authority position in this respect is covered at Paragraph 8.

20. Furthermore the results of the recent Staff Survey (something advocated strongly by Adrian Thomas) showed a 19 percentage point improvement in engagement which was described as 'unprecedented' by People Insight.

21. In summary it is the view of Officers that the Authority is well placed to demonstrate it is meeting Governmental expectations against all of the areas as set out by the Minister.

Equality and Diversity Implications

22. There are no equality and diversity implications contained within this report.

Staff Implications

23. There are no staff implications contained within this report.

Legal Implications

24. Legislative changes referenced within this report may affect the governance of MFRA in the future however at this time MFRA continues to conduct and discharge its legal duties and responsibilities.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

25. There are no financial implications contained within this report.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

26. There are no risk management implications contained within this report.

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

27. The aspects of the performance of the Authority as outlined in this report all contribute towards achievement of the Mission.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

GLOSSARY OF TERMS
