

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

24 MAY 2018

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Les Byrom (acting chair), Edna Finneran, Lynne Thompson, Sharon Connor, Joe De'Asha, Janet Grace, Peter Brennan, Lesley Rennie, James Roberts and Jean Stapleton

Also Present:

Apologies of absence were received from:

Jane Kennedy (PCC), Cllr Denise Allen, Cllr Brian Kenny, Cllr Chris Meaden, Cllr Barbara Murray, Cllr Pat Ireland, Cllr Sharon Sullivan and Cllr Paul Tweed

1. Preliminary Matters

Members considered the identification of any declarations of interest, matters of urgency, or items that would require the exclusion of the press and public due to the disclosure of exempt information.

Resolved that:

a) no declarations of interest were made by individual Members in relation to any item of business on the Agenda.

b) no additional items of business were determined by the Chair to be considered as matters of urgency; and

c) The following items of business required the exclusion of the press and public during consideration thereof, due to the possible disclosure of exempt information:

- Agenda item 6 – “Part 2 – EXEMPT Minutes of the Previous Meeting 12th April 2018” contains Exempt information by virtue of Paragraphs 1 & 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.
- Agenda item 7 – “Disposal of Allerton Fire Station” contains Exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.
- Agenda item 8 – “Disposal of Whiston Fire Station” contains Exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

2. Minutes of the Budget Authority Meeting 22nd February 2018

The Minutes of the Budget Authority Meeting, held on 22nd February 2018, were approved as a correct record and where signed accordingly by the Chair.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the authority, held on 12th April 2018, were approved as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

4. SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2017-18 END OF YEAR REPORT

Members considered Report CFO/027/18 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning scrutiny of performance against the Service objectives and the performance targets/ outcomes as set out in the Service Delivery Plan 2017/18.

Members were provided with a presentation in support of this report, by the IRMP Officer – Jackie Sutton.

Members were informed that the report covers the financial year 2017/18 and provides information on Functional Delivery Plan actions and Benchmark/ Summary Performance Indicators.

With regards to the Service Delivery Plan – Functional Plan actions, Members were advised that for 2017/18, there were 56 action points. Out of those, 15 actions have now been completed. For the remainder, some aspects of the actions will be carried forward to 2018/19.

In relation to the Summary Performance Indicators, Members were informed that the targets were met for several indicators, including achievement of the attendance standard, the number of primary fires attended and total carbon output of all buildings.

With regards to the total number of accidental dwelling fires attended, there were 63 less for 2017/18 than for the previous year.

Members were informed that there were 4 fatalities from accidental dwelling fires for the year 2017/18, which is the lowest amount ever recorded. However we will continue to ensure that resources are targeted to those most vulnerable within our communities.

The number of injuries from accidental dwelling fires, also saw a reduction on the previous year, as did the number of road traffic collisions attended; and the number of injuries in road traffic collisions.

Other areas where the performance target was met, were the number of deliberate dwelling fires in unoccupied property; the number of injuries in deliberate dwellings; and the number of deliberate fires in non-domestic premises.

With regards to areas where performance was within 10% of the target, Members were informed that the total number of emergency calls received was

over 500 more than the previous year, however there were a number of large scale incidents for which there were many duplicate calls.

The total number of incidents attended was also within 10% of the target; and Members were advised that there were considerably more incidents within the first half of the year. The total number of fires in Merseyside was also within 10% of the target, as was the total number of secondary fires attended. With regards to the number of secondary fires, Members were informed that during the Bonfire Period, there was a 32% reduction in secondary fires on the previous year, therefore the overall increase on the previous year is likely to be attributable to the good weather observed earlier in the year.

A further area where performance was within 10% of the target was in relation to Sickness Absence Indicators. Members were informed that there has been an increase in the percentage of available shifts lost to sickness absence amongst Grey Book staff, with absence levels peaking during the months of October 2017 and March 2018. With regards to Green/ Red Book staff, a peak was observed during January 2018, however no preventable trends have been identified.

It was highlighted to Members that our sickness absence levels are average when compared against those for other fire and rescue services.

The presentation also highlighted areas where performance targets were not met. With regards to total special services attended, Members were advised that there are a number of reasons why these have increased, such as assisting other agencies, effecting entry and attendance at suicide attempts; and that the target for next year will be adjusted accordingly.

Other areas where targets have not been met were the total number of false alarms attended; and the number of false alarm calls due to AFA equipment in domestic premises. Also, the number of deliberate vehicle fires exceeded the target by 115.

With regards to Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSC's), Members were advised that a total of 51989 were completed, with 56.4% being identified from status reports as having at least one occupant over the age of 65. Within this total figure, were 9571 Safe and Well visits undertaken by Prevention Advocates.

Questions were raised by Members in relation to the number of emergency calls and serial hoax callers. Reference was made to a piece of work being undertaken by Paramedics which aims to identify and make contact with serial callers who often have mental ill health issues; and whether this was something which MFRA would be involved with.

Members were advised that MFRA do not have the same challenges as the Police and NWS. However we do have some issues with prolific offenders, the majority of which do have mental health related issues, which we do try to tackle where we can. Also, with regards to the number of HFSC's completed, this has now extended into Safe and Well Visits, which has broadened the intervention of MFRA to those individuals most at risk, to ensure resources are targeted accordingly. Members were informed that MFRA have made significant inroads

in this regard, with the lowest number of fire related recorded deaths observed, which is remarkable given the challenges.

It was also highlighted that the intention was for over 60% of HFSC's to be targeted to those over the age of 65, however due to the tragic Grenfell Tower incident, lots of resources have been targeted towards high rise premises.

Members were provided with some context to the figures around false alarms, which had observed a small increase. They were informed that 5 years ago, the policy around false alarms was changed, which resulted in a massive reduction in unwanted calls and an ability to target resources far more appropriately.

With regards to the increase in sickness absence, Members were advised that a number of absences were due to a particular strain of the flu virus which was prevalent earlier in the year; and that in recent months, absence levels have returned to the level observed previously.

With regards to the increase in special service calls around assisting with suicide attempts, Members were advised that this creates challenges for our staff with regards to their own wellbeing. They were informed that there has been a significant increase in such incidents, both locally and nationally; and MFRA are undertaking work to provide some insight into the reasons for such increases. As a result, a Zero Suicide Campaign has been devised, further details of which will be brought back to Members in the near future.

Comments were made by Members congratulating staff on completing so many HFSC's, despite ongoing cuts. They commented that they had participated in reassurance campaigns and were amazed by the amount of public support for MFRA and confidence in our staff.

Further questions were raised by Members in relation to any action taken by MFRA in respect of false alarms. Members were informed that with regards to businesses, there had been a significant reduction in calls as we will only respond once a call confirming the fire has been received. However, with regards to residential properties, it has been recognised that there are often vulnerable people within such premises. Therefore, depending on the nature of the property and the category of the individuals, the focus may be more around prevention. Where issues are due to poor management, the Protection Team would work with the responsible person in a supportive way to try to reduce actuations. Where issues continue to occur, the Protection Team would work more robustly with the responsible person and may look to introduce a double knock system, whereby two alarms are required to actuate. MFRA have not sort to charge individuals as yet, or prohibit the use of buildings.

Members were advised that further details could be brought back regarding this and that when compared to other FRS's, Merseyside was one of the best in the Country at reducing AFA's.

Members requested that further information be brought back to a future meeting regarding enforcements and prosecutions generally.

Further comments were made regarding the introduction of compulsory sprinkler systems in North Wales, which is likely to see an increase in safety of domestic properties. Politicians are continuing to lobby Government to introduce the same requirements and it would be interesting to monitor the impact within North Wales.

Members Resolved that:

- (a) The attached reports be approved for publication on the Service Website.
- (b) Further information be brought back to a future meeting, regarding the Zero Suicide Campaign.
- (c) A further report be brought back to Members, regarding enforcement and prosecution activity.

5. Lead Member and Scrutiny Review Outcomes and Options

Members considered Report CFO/031/18 of the Monitoring Officer, concerning the key outcomes of a review of MFRA's Lead Member and Scrutiny processes; and proposed options for strengthening MFRA's scrutiny arrangements.

Members were provided with an overview of the report, which highlighted the drivers for undertaking a review of scrutiny arrangements; and the key stakeholders consulted as part of the review. Members were informed that during the review, a number of common themes and ideas were identified, in terms of current issues and suggested improvements.

Members were informed of proposals to re-introduce a Forward Work Plan, aligned to the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). As the IRMP outlines how MFRA is planning for the future, it was considered that scrutiny should be focused around that plan.

With regards to a Committee Structure to support improved scrutiny, the various options considered were highlighted to Members, along with the option considered by the Strategic Management Group to be the most appropriate.

Members were requested to consider the information contained within the report; and decide on their preferred structure option and arrangements for Lead Member roles.

The acting Chair of the Authority concurred that improvements could be made around scrutiny and that scrutiny around the IRMP would be a good way forward. However, as a number of Members were not present at the meeting and there would be a number of changes in Authority Membership for the forthcoming Municipal Year, it was suggested that the report be noted as a general direction of travel, but that further consideration be given to the structure, with a proposal submitted to the Annual General Meeting for consideration.

Members Resolved that:

- (a) The key outcomes of a review of MFRA's current Lead Member and Scrutiny processes, be noted.
- (b) The various proposals contained within the report and outlined at Paragraph 20, for strengthening MFRA's scrutiny arrangements, be approved.
- (c) Further consideration be given by the acting Chair of the Authority in consultation with the Chief Fire Officer, to a suitable Committee Structure to support improved scrutiny arrangements, with a proposal submitted to the Annual General Meeting on 14th June 2018 for consideration and approval.

6. Part 2 EXEMPT Minutes of the Previous Meeting 12th April 2018

The Part 2 – EXEMPT Minutes of the previous meeting, held on 12th April 2018, were approved as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

7. Disposal of Allerton Fire station

Members considered Report CFO/030/18 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the outcome of a joint marketing exercise for the disposal of Allerton Fire Station and Allerton Police Station.

Members were provided with an overview of the report, which highlighted the background detail and explained that the highest bids received were for the combined fire and police sites.

Members were advised that as a result of the bidding process, MFRA were inundated with expressions of interest, with eighteen formal offers received. Some of the formal offers received were conditional offers and some were unconditional offers. Six offers were received for the combined site, some of which were higher than the offer recommended for approval, however several had a number of conditions attached to the offers, making them more problematic.

Members were advised that the decision to recommend the selected offer for approval was made on balance of several factors; and following discussions with Merseyside Police. The offer recommended for approval was the highest unconditional offer received.

Members Resolved that:

- (a) The disposal of Allerton Fire Station following a joint marketing exercise of Allerton Fire Station and Allerton Police Station, in agreement with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), be agreed.

(b) The criteria applied and the associated advantages and disadvantages of the unconditional and conditional offers made, be noted.

(c) The unconditional offer from Liverpool Mutual Homes, be approved.

8. Disposal of Whiston Fire Station

Members considered Report CFO/029/18 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning approval of the sale of Whiston Fire Station to Joy International Limited for £315k.

Members were provided with an overview of the report, which highlighted that the £315k offered was significantly higher than the anticipated value. Members were informed that the site was marketed in the same way as Allerton Fire Station, albeit not as exhaustively, with the highest unconditional offer received being proposed for approval.

Members were advised that should they approve the sale, the additional capital receipt would be used to offset the drawdown from the Capital reserve.

Members Resolved that:

The sale of Whiston Fire Station to Joy International Limited for £315k, be approved.

Close

Date of next meeting Thursday, 14 June 2018

Signed:_____

Date:_____