

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

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| MEETING OF THE: | AUTHORITY | | |
| DATE: | 18 OCTOBER 2018 | REPORT NO: | CFO/068/18 |
| PRESENTING OFFICER | CHIEF FIRE OFFICER (CFO) | | |
| RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: | CFO | REPORT AUTHOR: | CFO |
| OFFICERS CONSULTED: | | | |
| TITLE OF REPORT: | MFRA LOBBYING STRATEGY | | |

APPENDICES:

Purpose of Report

1. To set out a proposed lobbying strategy, which if adopted by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (MFRA) can be utilised by Members to influence the Government's funding settlement for 2019/20 and the Comprehensive Spending Review 2019 in order to obtain the best financial settlement possible.

Recommendation

2. That Members;
 - a) Approve the approach and actions in relation to lobbying Government as set out in this report, including the drafting of a lobbying submission to be presented to Government by (insert dates) in support of fair funding for MFRA.
 - b) Note the tight timescale for action and instruct the Chief Fire Officer to facilitate all necessary steps to prepare a lobbying submission that enjoys the full supported Merseyside's political leadership.
 - c) Approve a draft resolution for submission to the District Councils in support of additional Government funding for MFRA.

Introduction and Background

3. Based on announcements in previous years it is anticipated by the Treasurer that, the 2019/20 Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement including Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority will be announced on or around 18th December 2018.

4. Although the indicative 2019/20 funding support from the Government was announced as part of the four year financial settlement that the Authority accepted, there is a case to argue that funding should now be increased in light of higher pay awards and the need to invest in protection and prevention services in light of Grenfell.
5. There is a narrow window of opportunity for the Authority and its partners to influence Government to secure the best Funding Settlement possible for the Authority. As such the Authority seeks agreement to adopt the approach detailed in paragraph 7- 18 below.
6. In addition MFRA commit to lobby the Government for additional financial support for fire, and in particular metropolitan FRAs, to be included in the Comprehensive Spending Review for 2019 (CSR 2019). Government departments are currently working with the Treasury to determine future departmental spending limits that will apply to 2020/21 and possibly a further one to three years. The CSR 2019 is unlikely to be finalised until the Chancellor's Autumn Budget Statement in November 2019.

Joint Lobbying Approach

7. The Authority will continue to rely upon a joined up approach to lobbying Government for additional funding based upon strong support from Merseyside Members of Parliament, Merseyside District Council Leaders, the Liverpool City Mayor, the Liverpool City Region Mayor and the representative bodies.
8. All parties are in agreement that the cuts to which the Authority has been subject have now gone too far and are now negatively impacting upon service delivery.
9. At a meeting on 24th August 2018 Mayors Anderson and Rotherham and Merseyside District Council Leaders and MFRA it was agreed and publicly announced that, all political leaders in Merseyside would jointly lobby Government to seek the maximum flexibility possible in the application of Council Tax arrangements to secure an increase in funding for MFRA.
10. This report identifies the key actions and deadlines in relation to building upon the strong political mandate now in place amongst the political leadership to ensure that the Authority is best positioned to influence the 2019/20 Finance Settlement and beyond (CSR 2019) in order to obtain the required funding for MFRA to protect the Merseyside Community from fire risk.

Lobbying Objectives

2019/20:-

11. The principal 2019/20 lobbying objective of the Authority is that it will seek from Government the necessary flexibility to increase Council Tax beyond the current referendum cap by a one off increase of £5 (for Band D properties) based on clear political and public support on Merseyside.

CSR 2019:-

12. The Authority will seek assurances from Government that it will not be subject to any further reductions in grant funding in order to prevent any further negative impact upon service delivery in the CSR 2019 and any new cost pressures are fully funded
13. In consultation with Merseyside's political leadership the Authority will prepare a lobbying submission for the CSR 2019 to be presented to Government setting out the case for a funding settlement that ensures the Authority can maintain a level of operational response that meets the needs of the Merseyside Community. The case made by the Authority will be evidence based and outcomes driven and be fully endorsed by Merseyside's political leadership.
14. The lobbying submission will be presented to Government following endorsement by Merseyside's political leadership including Members of Parliament, Merseyside District Council Leaders, the Liverpool City Mayor, the Liverpool City Region Mayor and the representative bodies.
15. The lobbying submission presented to Government will also address the issue of improving firefighters pay which is a key objective for the political and managerial leadership of MFRA.
16. A resolution has been drafted by the Chair and Deputy Chair of MFRA for presentation to the Leaders of 5 Merseyside constituent Local Authorities inviting each of the District Councils to formally confirm their support for MFRA and its resolve to seek an increase in funding from the Government and to work in conjunction with the Authority to seek a fair funding settlement.

"This Council believes that the cuts imposed by Government on Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority (MFRA) have gone too far and should be reversed to ensure basic public safety is protected. To this end the Council will work in collaboration with MFRA, Merseyside's constituent District Councils, Mayors Anderson and Rotherham, MP's and the Trade Unions to jointly lobby Government for an increase in funding for MFRS, including seeking Government approval to allow the maximum flexibility possible in the application of Council Tax arrangements.

Action Time Table

17. MFRA will coordinate all the necessary action to ensure that, the lobbying submission and associated action to lobby Government are fully endorsed by Merseyside's political leadership prior to the presentation of the submission to Government on.
18. The table sets out the action plan in support of lobbying of Government for an increase in funding for MFRA.

| Date | Action |
|--|--------|
| 2019/20 Financial Settlement – Lobbying Strategy | |

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| 18 th October 2018 | Authority approves report setting out its lobbying strategy detailing its approach and key actions in lobbying Government for fair funding. |
| 19 th October 2018 | Principal Officers meet Merseyside Members of Parliament to provide update on funding position and secure support for lobbying strategy |
| 19 th October 2018 | Chair/Dep Chair write to 5 District Council Leaders submitting draft resolution in support of additional funding for MFRA and approval for lobbying strategy and joint lobbying action. |
| 8 th November 2018 | CFO to address Combined Authority to provide update on funding position and secure support for lobbying strategy and joint lobbying action. |
| Date | CFO and Chair/Dep Chair address All Parliamentary Committee of Merseyside Members Parliaments to seek support for additional funding and agree joint lobbying approach |
| Date | Lobbying submission presented to Government. Probably in form of letter to the Fire Minister |
| CSR 2019 Lobbying Strategy | 2019/20 Financial Settlement – Lobbying Strategy |
| 2018 - 2019 | CSR 2019 Submission |
| 24 th January 2019 | Budget Strategy Day. Presentation of outcome and implications of Funding Settlement |

Equality and Diversity Implications

19. None

Staff Implications

20. None

Legal Implications

21. None

Financial Implications & Value for Money

22. None

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

23. None

24. The capability of the Authority to deliver a service consistent with its mission is subject to securing a fair funding settlement from Government. The lobbying submission and lobbying actions set out in this report will contribute to securing that objective.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

GLOSSARY OF TERMS
