

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

30 OCTOBER 2018

MINUTES

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

Also Present:

Apologies of absence were received from: Anthony Boyle,
Cllr Sharon Connor, Cllr Steff O'Keeffe and Cllr Lisa Preston

1. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENT

Prior to the start of the meeting, information regarding general housekeeping was provided by the Chair to all in attendance.

The Chair confirmed that proceedings of the meeting would not be filmed on this occasion and opened the meeting.

2. 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) 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 to be considered as matters of urgency were determined by the Chair; and
- c) no items of business required the exclusion of the press and public during consideration thereof because of the possibility of the disclosure of exempt information.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

As this was the first meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, there were no previous Minutes for approval to be recorded and signed accordingly by the Chair.

4. PEOPLE STRATEGY PRESENTATION

A presentation was given by Nick Mernock – Director of People & Organisational Development, concerning the People Strategy 2017-2020, and an overview of the People and Organisational Development (POD) Directorate.

Members were advised that the POD Directorate consists of the Occupational Health Team, who deal with employee health and wellbeing. It was noted that the support provided through our Occupational Health Team, has led to our sickness absence figures being under target. The Department also consists of the People Services Team, who arrange contracts of employment and continue to regularly look at terms and conditions; and the Organisational Development and Recruitment Team, who are currently working extremely hard with firefighter recruitment and work around promoting MFRA as a potential employer amongst individuals from underrepresented groups.

Members were then informed of the 6 key elements of the People Strategy, which are:

- Strengthen leadership
- Provide excellent training
- Maximise wellbeing
- Ways of working
- Diversifying our workforce
- Develop cultural values and behaviours

Members were advised of the subsequent challenges the People and Organisational Development Directorate look to progress in the near future, which are around our Recruitment/Work Profile, Apprenticeships, Succession Planning and Sickness Absence.

Members then discussed the People Strategy and identified some areas which they would like to focus on for future reviews.

Members were particularly keen to focus on work around staff retention; and how we value and reward our staff.

It was suggested to Members that this area could be considered as a “Rapid Review”, which was supported by Members.

Discussion took place regarding areas of the service where we have lost staff to alternative employers; and the reasons why those individuals chose to leave MFRA.

Members were informed that this data will be provided as part of the Rapid Review Meeting.

Members resolved that:

A Rapid Review Meeting be established, to consider “Retention and Succession Planning”.

5. Health & Safety Report

Members considered report CFO/072/18 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning the content of the Annual Health, Safety & Welfare Report which details the performance of the Authority against its performance indicators for Health Safety and Welfare for financial year 2017/18.

A brief overview of the report was provided to Members relating to the following:

Staff Injuries

- It was identified that there were 51 injuries to staff members for the period of 2017-18. 33 of these individuals remained in work, which ascertains they were minor injuries in nature. This shows a positive reporting culture within MFRS.
- 42 injuries were to operational staff and 26 of the individuals remained on duty, which again highlights they were minor in nature. A further 9 returned to work within a week.
- The largest single injury type was “injured while handling, lifting or carrying”.
- There were 9 injuries to non-operational staff recorded in 2017/18 which is the first time this has been recorded as a single figure. The common cause of these injuries were burns. 7 of the individuals remained on duty which highlights they were minor in nature. The two who were absent returned to work within a week.
- 324 days were lost to injuries at work for 2017-18, although 224 of these days relate to 3 individuals who have a long term absence.

Road Traffic Collisions (RTC) involving Authority vehicles

- A total of 57 RTC's involving were recorded in 2017/18 which was under target by 23%, meaning a 19% decrease on the previous year.
- All RTC's are reviewed on a monthly basis at the Road Risk Review Group who collectively decide on the appropriate course of action to be taken.

Near miss reporting

- There was an increase of 35 near miss reports this year which is encouraging as early reporting of issues helps reduce the potential of injuries. The high reporting reflects a positive Health & Safety culture within MFRA.

Joint workplace inspections

- 54 H&S joint workplace inspections were carried out with Trade Union Safety Representatives.

Members enquired about the incident where one firefighter was struck by a vehicle at the scene of a RTC after a third party ignored road restrictions and it

was suggested that this case could be used as an example for media purposes in the future, so it does not happen again.

Members were advised that a report would be submitted to the next Scrutiny Committee about this incident and the outcome of it in relation to criminal proceedings.

Members were reminded that considering MFRS attended over 15000 incidents last year, the number of injuries show that MFRA continues to be a safe place to work.

Members expressed concern regarding the largest injury type being handling or lifting; and they were advised that every member of staff receives manual handling training, which is monitored. There are also procedures in place such as warm ups before duties to help reduce this type of injury.

Members enquired about the processes of advanced driving courses and standard driving. Members were advised that all employees must have a full driving licence to drive a service vehicle. Employees that do have a full licence are also required to have a medical and complete a vehicle validation. Response vehicle drivers must pass an Emergency Fire Appliance Driver course. All drivers are reviewed and re-evaluated and how often depends on how much they use service vehicles. There are also trackers on vehicles to support driving practices and check speed.

Members asked if every accident is investigated and were advised that all incidents are recorded on the Health and Safety system. Members requested some more information regarding this process and it was suggested that this could be demonstrated to them in the future.

Members also commented on recent incidents at which firefighters have been attacked, or fire appliances have been vandalised. They condemned such behaviour which they considered to be assault, rather than just anti-social behaviour.

Members resolved that:

- a) the content of the Annual Health, Safety & Welfare Report for the period April 2017 to March 2018, be noted.
- b) the performance outcomes of the Authority against its Health Safety & Welfare performance targets for the period April 2017 to March 2018, be noted.
- c) a report be submitted to the next Scrutiny Committee on 17th January 2019, regarding an RTC incident at which a firefighter was struck by a third party.
- d) the process regarding accident reporting, investigation and the monitoring of trends, be considered at the next Scrutiny Committee for Operational Response on 17th January 2019.

6. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER 2018-19 APRIL TO AUG UPDATE

Members considered report CFO/067/18 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning the current risks contained within the Corporate Risk Register, the status of the risks and associated control measures, including reference to any new risks introduced or any risks that no longer apply and can be removed.

Members were advised that currently all the risks in the register are still valid, but that it may look different in the future.

Members were asked if they thought this report should be taken to the Full Authority in future; and Members agreed that it should.

Members resolved that:

- a) the updated Corporate Risk Register for 2018/19, which incorporates the current status of those risks to August 2018, be approved.
- b) in future the Corporate Risk Register update reports, be submitted to the Full Authority for approval.

7. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Annual Report April 2017 to March 2018

Members considered report CFO/057/18 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning an update on the progress made against the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (ED&I) Action Plan 2017-2020 and our ED&I objectives for 2017-2020.

Members were reminded that this report went to the Full Authority Meeting on 18th October 2018 and the decision to consider and approve it had already been agreed.

Members praised the report and remarked on the great work that has been done around recruiting a diverse workforce. Members were advised that there are still challenges to face regarding progression for the organisation, but that we are looking into this and it will hopefully be improved.

Members stated how delighted they were with our Cadet and Prince's Trust programmes; and how proud they are of the young people who are part of the teams.

Members resolved that:

The attached report demonstrating Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and in order to meet its Public Sector Equality Duties, be noted.

8. Equality Analysis of Workforce and Employment Data as at 31.03.18

Members considered report CFO/064/18 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning a breakdown of the Authority's workforce (people) data produced in order to meet the Equality Act 2010, Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and in order to allow scrutiny of the service in relation to the PSED.

The report also provides an overview of the current and planned work that is in place to address the key areas of results contained within the Workforce and Employment Data Report.

Members were reminded that this report went to the Full Authority Meeting on 18th October 2018 and the decisions to note, approve and endorse it have already been agreed.

A brief overview of the report was given to Members highlighting that the purpose of the report is to demonstrate Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority's (MFRA) compliance with the Equality Act 2010. It was added that this report validates what this organisation thinks and it shows we support our people.

Members asked about what the future volunteer recruitment plan entails and were told a report regarding this and the current volunteers in service would be produced and be available at the Scrutiny Committee for Community Risk Management.

Members resolved that:

- a) the Equality Analysis of Workforce and Employment Data Report in order to demonstrate our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and to meet its Public Sector Equality Duties, be noted.
- b) the strategic approaches to addressing the key areas of the Workforce data, be noted.
- c) The provision of further updates to provide scrutiny of the recently endorsed People Strategy, be noted.
- d) a report around MFRA Volunteers, be produced and submitted to the Scrutiny Committee for Community Risk Management on 5th March 2019.

9. Final Forward Plan for People Scrutiny

Members considered items for inclusion in a forward work plan, for the People function.

It was agreed by Members that the 1st Rapid Review for People Scrutiny will take place on 17th January 2019 immediately prior to the next Scrutiny meeting for Operational Response.

It was agreed that this Rapid Review will be based on the following question:

“How does MFRA ensure current and future retention of staff and effective succession planning to avoid other employers recruiting the excellent staff from MFRA?”

Further questions that were raised to be answered were as follows:

1. How does MFRA currently go about staff retention and succession planning?
2. What are the trends in staff being recruited by other organisations – how many, over what timescale, costs of training lost?
3. Do we have any evidence of difficulties in recruiting any particular groups of staff and do we know why?
4. What can we offer MFRA staff to ensure retention of good staff and effective succession planning?
5. Can we have a breakdown of retention rates and promotion of all those in underrepresented groups in MFRA?
6. Is there any information from FRA's of a similar size in terms of how we compare on these issues?

Members queried whether external bodies could come and present how they see us, or newly qualified staff could come and comment how they found their new roles.

Members were advised that this process is welcomed by MFRA and the provision to do so is included within the Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Committee.

Members were also informed that representatives of external agencies have previously attended and presented to the Authority regarding specific work streams.

Members resolved that:

The following topics, be included on a Forward Work Plan for future Scrutiny in different areas:

1. The process for accident investigation, reporting, identification of trends and monitoring of workplace accidents to avoid repetition (Response).
2. The use, recruitment and take up of volunteers at MFRA (Community Risk Management).
3. The use and progress of positive action on recruitment at MFRA (People).

Close

Date of next meeting Thursday, 17 January 2019