

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

13 DECEMBER 2018

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Sharon Connor, Joe De'Asha, Sharon Sullivan, Chris Meaden, Jean Stapleton and Les Byrom

Also Present:

Apologies of absence were received from:
James Roberts, Andrew Makinson and Steff O'Keeffe

11. 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 to all present that the proceedings of the meeting would not be filmed.

1. 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.

Resolved that:

- a) The following declarations of interest were made by individual Members in relation to items of business on the Agenda:
 - Cllr Les Byrom declared a personal interest in relation to **Agenda Item 10 – “Spare Land at Bootle & Netherton Fire Station”**, due to being a Sefton Councillor.
- b) There were no additional items of business to be considered as matters of urgency, as determined by the Chair; and
- c) The following items of business required the exclusion of the press and public during consideration thereof because of the possibility of the disclosure of exempt information:
 - **Agenda Item 11 – “TDA Redevelopment”**

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 26th July 2018, were approved as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

3. STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2017-18

Members considered report CFO/074/18 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the Authority's Statement of Assurance 2017-18 for publication on the Authority website.

Members were provided with a brief overview of the report, which explained that the Statement of Assurance is a retrospective document, looking back on the Authority's performance for the previous year.

Members commented that the Statement of Assurance is a document that the Authority should be proud of, as it highlights our high performance in crucial areas, such as responses times.

Members also stated that the document should be sent to each of the five Merseyside District Councils; and should questions be raised regarding the quality of the service, the document could also be provided to demonstrate the high standard of service provided by MFRA.

Members requested that once the document had been signed, they be provided with a copy electronically for them to distribute to their own District Councils and other parties.

Members Resolved that:

- a) The information contained within the report, be noted.
- b) The Authority's draft Statement of Assurance 2017-18, be approved.
- c) The Statement of Assurance 2017-18, be signed by the Chair of Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority and the Chief Fire Officer.
- d) The approved Statement of Assurance 2017-18, be provided to Members electronically, for wider distribution.

4. Financial Review 2018/19 - April to September

Members considered report CFO/073/18 of the Treasurer, concerning the financial position, revenue and capital, for the Authority for 2018/19. The Authority receives regular comprehensive financial reviews during the year which provide a full health check on the Authority's finances. This report covers the period April to September 2018.

Members were provided with a detailed overview of the report, which covered revenue and capital spend, the Authority's reserves; and a review of the treasury management performance against the approved strategy.

With regards to the revenue budget and spend, which outlines the position in relation to day to day activity, Members were informed that it remains consistent with the approved original budget; and that the Authority is on target to deliver the approved revenue savings options. However, they were also informed that until the station merger projects at Saughall Massie and St. Helens have been completed, some of the required structural changes cannot be formally implemented, although in cash terms, employee savings are being delivered as firefighter retirements remain consistent with those anticipated; and the required duty system changes have been implemented.

Members were also advised that although the revenue spend is anticipated to be consistent with the budget, officers will continue to try and deliver saving options at the earliest point, in order to deliver one-off savings in the year.

In relation to the Capital Programme and spend, which outlines the current planned investment in our assets and spend to date, Members were informed of the amendments to the approved capital programme of an additional £2.946m, of which £2.45m relates to the approved increase in the new St. Helens community fire station scheme. They were also advised that Appendices B and C to the report, outline the latest planned capital spend.

In terms of reserves, Members were advised that £0.474m of reserves had been utilised within the reporting period, of which £0.325m was used to fund approved additional works on the Formby LLAR building.

Members were also informed that Appendix D outlines the purpose of each reserve and its planned use. In addition, paragraph 20 of the report summarises the movement on the overall level of reserves since reserves reached their peak value at the end of 2016/17, which shows an approximate 20% reduction in the value of reserves by the end of Quarter 2.

In terms of a review of the treasury management performance against the approved strategy, which considers any borrowing, investments and management of cash, Members were informed that performance was consistent with the approved strategy for 2018/19. It was confirmed that no new loans had been taken out in the year to date; and as at the end of September, the Authority held £42.6m of investments. It was highlighted however, that this included a firefighter's pension grant of £27.3m received in July, which will be utilised this year.

Members commented that they were very happy with the report and requested that their thanks be recorded to officers.

Comments were made by Members with regards to the presentation of information within the report, particularly in relation to reserves. It was suggested that information regarding the Authority's reserves, be separated into two distinct tables; one showing the level of "general" reserves and the other outlining "committed" reserves. It was also suggested that the term "committed reserves" be used, rather than "earmarked reserves"

Officers confirmed that these requests would be actioned; and it was suggested that it may be worthwhile including information within the table to state when it was planned to use the reserves.

With regards to the use of reserves, Members attention was drawn to paragraphs 20 to 22 of the report. They were informed that arguments have been put forward by Ministers, stating that MFRA cannot be stretched if they have been able to increase their level of reserves. However paragraph 20 clearly shows that the trend of increasing reserves has now been reversed, with the level of reserves anticipated to drop below £5m by the end of 20121/2022.

Members Resolved that:

- a) The contents of the report, be noted.
- b) The Treasurer be instructed to continue to work with budget managers to maximise savings in 2018/19.
- c) The amendments to the capital programme, be approved.
- d) The current planned use of approved reserves, be noted.
- e) For future reports, the term “earmarked reserves” be amended to “committed reserves”.
- f) For future reports, information regarding reserves be separated into “general reserves” and “committed reserves”, for clarity.

5. TREASURY MANAGEMENT INTERIM REPORT 2018/19

Members considered report CFO/078/18 of the Treasurer, concerning a review of the Authority Treasury Management activities during the year, to ensure that they are consistent with its approved Treasury Management Strategy and have remained within the approved Prudential Indicators. The report ensures that the Authority meets the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities; and outlines the Treasury Management activities and performance for the first half of the financial year 2018/19.

Members were informed that this report expands on the Treasury Management update contained within the previous report, with the detailed interim Treasury Management report being attached at Appendix A. Further detail and background regarding Treasury Management and its purpose and activities, was also highlighted to Members.

It was confirmed that the report and Appendix simply reaffirm the information contained within the April to September Financial Review Report.

Members resolved that:

the contents of the report, be noted.

6. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan 2017-2020, Functional Priorities 2018/19, Quarter 1 & Quarter 2

Members considered Report CFO/077/18 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning progress made against the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (ED&I) Action Plan – Year 2 for Quarters 1 and 2.

It was highlighted to Members that the ED&I Action Plan was first introduced in April 2013, to help progress the ED&I agenda within MFRA.

Members were provided with an overview of the report, which highlighted some of the work undertaken during the reporting period, in delivering against the Action Plan and Equality Objectives.

Some of the key areas of work highlighted, included the introduction of dyslexia assessments, the training of all Community Risk Management staff in Level 2 Safeguarding; and our ongoing work with diverse businesses, addressing language barriers.

Members were also informed of a fully inclusive communication package – “Recite me”, which can be added to the new website and Portal, and can translate information into over 50 languages; and ensure all information is fully accessible.

In addition, Members were advised that all policies have been reviewed to ensure that they support staff who have carer responsibilities; and they were also informed of work which has commenced with Liverpool Football Club foundation and Everton in the Community Blue Base, around work with young people from a wide range of backgrounds and protected groups.

Members commented that they were extremely proud of the extensive work undertaken; and it was suggested that Members should highlight the report within their own authorities; and direct information to relevant committees.

Further comments were made regarding the fantastic work around embedding mental health training within the Prince’s Trust Programmes, with a recent example highlighted; and the work undertaken across the whole organisation with regards to mental health.

Comments were also made regarding the requirement for FRS’s to be reflective of the communities that they serve, in order to maintain relevance.

With regards to the Prince’s Trust, Members stated that questions are often raised around why MFRA are involved in the programme. However anyone who is exposed to it can see the importance of what we do, as those who participate become ambassadors for MFRA; and it enables MFRA to invest back into a

healthy community, making the fire service a relevant part of the wider community.

Questions were raised by Members regarding diverse groups and whether there are any groups that MFRA have not engaged with.

Members were advised that we are just about to enter our planning cycle, which is informed by a substantial amount of data and information around demographics and knowing our communities, which enables us to target our resources effectively. This enables our Station Plans to be tailored effectively to the needs of the local area. Therefore, to the knowledge of officers, there are no diverse groups that have not been engaged, as if we were aware of any, they would certainly have been engaged with.

A further question was raised regarding hearing loops; and whether there is any legislative requirement to provide them in all public buildings.

Members were advised that there is not at present, but it is something that all public services try to provide. It was also noted that for employees who are hard of hearing, there is a requirement for employers to make reasonable adjustments on the grounds of disability.

Members were also informed that MFRA have a mobile hearing loop which can be taken to external venues for the purposes of consultation.

Members Resolved that:

- a) The progress made against the ED&I Action Plan – Year 2 – Quarter 1 and Quarter 2, be noted.
- b) Their thanks be recorded to staff for the fantastic work undertaken around ED&I.

7. IRMP update and planning process for 2019/20

Members considered Report CFO/076/18 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning progress made so far in relation to the 2017/20 Integrated Risk Management Plan; and the planning process and timetable for 2019/20.

Members were provided with an overview of the report, which explained that each year, an overarching Service Delivery Plan (SDP) is produced, which incorporates Functional Plans and Station Plans. It also highlighted the work undertaken with regards to the production and format of the SDP; and timescales and key milestones for the planning process.

Members were also advised that Appendix A to the report provides an update on progress made against the 2017/20 IRMP, with some specific areas for consideration highlighted, such as the Kerslake Report, Hackett Review, the internal Significant Incident Review into the Arena car park fire; and the outcomes of the Inspectorate, not just for MFRA but for the sector as a whole.

Members Resolved that:

- a) The planning process and timetable for 2019/20, be noted.
- b) The publication of the IRMP Update (Appendix A) on the website, be noted.

8. Development of Apprenticeships

Members considered Report CFO/062/18 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the further development of apprenticeships, incorporating the new funding delivery models and workplace application.

Members were advised that this reports picks up on some of the themes and comments discussed previously around developing young people; and they were provided with an overview of the report.

Members were informed that the approach outlined in the report, will provide the Authority with the opportunity to maximise its access to and use of the Apprenticeship Levy. It would also mean that the Authority will be required to undertake an OFSTED Inspection, however it is not anticipated that this would cause any issues or concerns.

Questions were raised by Members regarding the potential for individuals undertaking an apprenticeship with MFRA, to obtain a position within the organisation at the end of their apprenticeship. Members were informed that that would depend on the role. For example, in the case of the Firefighter Apprenticeship, the individuals would be guaranteed a position as a Firefighter, subject to completing the apprenticeship satisfactorily. For other apprenticeships, such as those within Community Safety, several have gone on to obtain roles within the organisation, but not all. However, those that have left at the end of their apprenticeship, have generally gained employment within other organisations.

Members Resolved that:

- a) The adoption and delivery of a number of apprenticeship standards, including Firefighter, Leadership and Management (Levels 3, 5, 7) and Community Safety, as a means of developing our people, be approved.
- b) Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority's (MFRA's) application to become an Employer Provider, to enable taking responsibility for the training of staff, thereby allowing the Authority to maximise its access to and use of the Apprenticeship Levy, be approved.
- c) A further report be provided, giving a full financial implication statement for the Authority following the attainment of Employer Provider Status.

9. Cycle to Work Scheme

Members considered Report CFO/077/18 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the plan to commence the Service Cycle to Work Scheme in 2019.

Members were provided with a brief overview of the report, which highlighted that following feedback from staff, it was decided to commence the Service Cycle to Work Scheme in 2019.

Members were also informed that there would be no negative financial implications for the Authority associated with re-introducing the scheme.

Members Resolved that:

The plan to re-introduce the Service Cycle to Work Scheme by the Occupational Health Team, be noted.

10. Spare land at Bootle & Netherton Fire Station

Members considered Report CFO/080/18 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning approval from Members for the transfer of a small section of surplus land at Bootle and Netherton Fire Station site, to Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC), to allow highway alterations to Buckley Hill Lane.

Members Resolved that:

- a) The land transfer as set out in the drawing detailed in Appendix A at zero value, be approved, subject to SMBC agreeing to an access easement over the adjoining land owned by SMBC, for the benefit of MFRA to access the remaining surplus land in its ownership.
- b) An option to be offered to SMBC exercisable within an 18 month period of time, to acquire the whole area of surplus land owned by MFRA, at either a price to be agreed (with provision for a surveyor to arbitrate in case of dispute) or at a price agreed now, subject to this price being index linked to Retail Price Index (RPI) increases, be approved.
- c) The intention to include an overage agreement within any contract to sell this surplus land, based on a share of any profit the SMBC make if they sell on the land, be noted.

11. TDA Redevelopment

Members considered Report CFO/079/18 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning approval to continue to the next stage of the Training and Development Academy (TDA) and Station 19 (Croxteth) redevelopment project.

Members were provided with a brief overview of the report, which highlighted some of the key reasons for the proposed re-development and the report recommendations.

Members were advised that the re-development of the TDA and Station 19 will greatly improve facilities for firefighters; and will enable MFRA to provide training for future risks.

Members Resolved that:

- a) The continuation of the project in its current designed format, as per Appendix A – Feasibility Study, be approved.
- b) A consultation and engagement process with the Local residents within a 250 meter radius of the site, be approved.
- c) The submission of a full planning application to Liverpool City Council, subject to receiving positive feedback from the consultation process, be approved.
- d) The £4.83m TDA capital refurbishment scheme; and the drawdown of £3.5m from the Capital Investment reserve, be approved.

Close

Date of next meeting Thursday, 28 March 2019

Signed: _____

Date: _____