

# **MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**17 OCTOBER 2019**

## **MINUTES**

**Present:** Cllr Leslie T. Byrom CBE (Chair) Councillors  
Lynne Thompson, Janet Grace, Brian Kenny, Lesley Rennie,  
James Roberts, Jean Stapleton, Paul Tweed,  
Andrew Makinson, Steff O'Keeffe, Lisa Preston, Arnall,  
Barrington, Berry, Knight and Spurrell

**Also Present:**

**Apologies of absence were received from:** Cllr Coleman  
and Cllr Linda Maloney

### **1. Preliminary Matters**

The Authority 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.

Members Resolved that:

- a) There were no declarations of interest made by individual Members in relation to any item of business on the Agenda
- b) There were no additional items of business determined by the Chair to be considered as matters of urgency; and
- c) The following item 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 7 – “Disposal of West Kirby”**

***This report contains EXEMPT information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.***

### **8. Part 2 EXEMPT Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

### **2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the authority, held on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2019, were approved as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

### **3. Bonfire Strategy 2019**

Members considered Report CFO/055/19 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the 2019 Bonfire Strategy, aimed to limit the number of deliberate fires and instances of anti-social behaviour across Merseyside.

Members were advised that the planning for the Bonfire Period commenced in June, with regular meetings taking place with partners across all five Districts, along with community engagement.

Members were informed that the presentation being delivered to them today, is the same presentation that has been delivered to key stakeholders.

The presentation provided an overview of performance over last year's Bonfire Period. It was highlighted that 2018 saw a 6.6% reduction in ASB fires; and 51.16 tonnes of bonfire material removed across Merseyside.

Members were advised that during the Bonfire Period last year, 73 target hardening visits were undertaken by the Arson Team, to help protect individuals who had been threatened with arson; there were 7 incidents involving fireworks, which was a reduction on the previous year; and there were 9 violence at work incidents.

The presentation provided a 10 year retrospective view of deliberate secondary fires across Merseyside, during Bonfire periods. It was highlighted to Members that in 2009, MFRA were attending over 750 such incidents over the period; whilst the last 3 years had observed year on year reductions, with the number of deliberate secondary fires during the 2018 Bonfire period, being 366.

Members were informed that following the 2018 Bonfire Period, a de-brief took place, which provided an opportunity for staff to give feedback and suggestions for improvements.

Members were informed that officers listened to staff; and as a result of the feedback received, have implemented several of their suggestions for this year. Suggestions implemented include having a trained Protection Officer on cover on key nights, to assist with any issues encountered; involving members of Princes Trust teams in delivering the Bonfire Strategy as part of their work placements; and running paid for social media campaigns.

Members were informed that other suggestions implemented, include undertaking assessments of bonfires prior to mobilising appliances, following a risk assessment. They were informed that for this year, a tolerant approach will be taken, with officers on the ground attending bonfires to assess the situation, prior to an appliance being mobilised to put out the fire. Where the bonfires are deemed to be safe by the officer attending, they will be allowed to continue burning. This approach will prevent appliances being tied up at secondary fires unnecessarily, meaning that they can remain available to respond to emergencies.

A further suggestion received, was around the Street Intervention Team being deployed to cover other areas. Members were informed that there are now Street Intervention Teams within the Knowsley and Sefton Districts, in addition to the Liverpool team, which will all be deployed over this year's Bonfire Period.

The presentation provided Members with information around Operation Bangor. They were informed that Operation Bangor is led by Merseyside Police, working in conjunction with partners, and is in response to the increase in anti-social behaviour, firework misuse and arson, during the Halloween and Bonfire period, with the 3 key nights being mischief night (30<sup>th</sup> October), Halloween (31<sup>st</sup> October) and Bonfire night (5<sup>th</sup> November).

Members were advised that a Tactical Co-Ordinating Group (Silver Command), will be established in the Joint Control Centre on these key nights, which will be staffed by a Group Manager; and will link into the Operational Support Room (OSR). They were advised that the OSR will be active from 30<sup>th</sup> October, through to 6<sup>th</sup> November; and it will be utilised to assist Fire Control and maintain contact with non-operational staff on the ground to ensure their safety, as well as to gather intelligence that will be used to inform the deployment of staff and resources on the following day.

Some key events that are taking place over the Bonfire Period were also highlighted to Members, which include football matches, the River of Light Festival and potentially Brexit.

The presentation then provided Members with an overview of the key points for each of the District Plans.

With regards to Sefton, Members were informed that a tipper truck has been provided by Sefton Council, with RSL's providing skips in hotspot areas in the run up to the Bonfire Period, to remove combustibles and prevent fly tipping. They were informed that the RSL's have their own tipper trucks that will be utilised over the period; and Merseyside Police will be providing assistance by delivering a presentation and DVD within local schools. In addition, they were informed of organised bonfires and fireworks displays taking place within Sefton; and youth clubs that will be open on key nights.

Within the Liverpool District, Members were informed that a social media campaign has been paid for by Liverpool City Council. Liverpool City Council have also funded a tipper truck; and have included a recorded message on their phone lines, advising residents to put their wheelie bins away over the Bonfire Period. Members were also informed that in order to assist with the provision of resources over the Bonfire Period, a joint multi-agency funding bid, was submitted to the Liverpool City Safe Board.

In relation to the Wirral District, Members were advised that Council firework displays are now in place, including one within Central Park, which saw an increase in ASB last year. They were advised that Magenta Living have organised a waste station day; and are funding the "StaySafe" bus, which will be staffed by Merseyside Police and Wirral Council officers. Members were also informed that Bonfire Safety Leaflets will be displayed on all Arriva and Stagecoach bus routes across Wirral, which are anticipated to be viewed by over 200,000 people.

Members were advised that within the St. Helens District, there will be a number of diversionary events for young people, over the period, including a cinema

visit. "Sparks in the Park", which is a popular diversionary event, will also be taking place on 5<sup>th</sup> November. They were also advised that housing providers will be holding skip days, which will be promoted in advance; and that Knowsley Council will be providing a tipper truck, that can be utilised across both Knowsley and St. Helens.

With regards to Knowsley District, Members were informed that Knowsley Council will be providing their tipper trucks for use by MFRA staff, within the Knowsley and St Helens Districts. A joint agency arson campaign will take place in areas that have seen an increase in deliberate secondary fires; and a number of leaflet drops will be completed in areas that have experienced high ASB and previous violence at work incidents.

Members were also informed of the Potential Arson Threat Scheme (PATS), which is a process for the reporting of buildings at risk of arson. Operational crews are being asked to report vulnerable properties, with this information being provided to the Arson Team for intervention.

The presentation then informed Members of the Community Risk Management routes that will be provided to operational crews. Following the attendance at incidents, operational crews will be requested to take particular routes back to their station, to provide a visible presence in areas experiencing high levels of ASB; and to undertake HFSC's.

Members were advised that operational crews will be delivering school presentations (4 per station), as well as supporting diversionary events where requested; and reporting fly tipping. They will also be assisting with the post-bonfire sweep on the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup> November, to ensure that any bonfires from the previous night are fully extinguished.

Further information was provided to Members around the tolerant approach, which will be adopted between 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> November, which will allow bonfires to burn where it is deemed safe and appropriate to do so, following a dynamic risk assessment. It is hoped that this approach will reduce the number of violence at work incidents for our staff.

Members were also informed that briefing packs have been created and distributed to operational crews; and the Trojan Fire Appliance will be available for deployment as required over the period. Members were advised that the Trojan Fire Appliance is supported by Merseyside Police; and is staffed by 2 Police Officers, alongside 2 operational staff.

Members were also informed that the Corporate Communications Team have robust plans in place and Members were provided with examples of some of the infographic material produced for distribution and sharing on social media platforms. They were also informed that the Corporate Communications Team have produced radio press releases and created a number of short safety videos.

With regards to the paid for social media campaign, Members were advised that we can ensure that these key safety messages reach everyone who uses a

social media platform; and it is estimated that last year, just under 700,000 people were reached via Facebook.

Members were advised that leaflets containing advice around fireworks, wheelie bins and general fire safety, have been provided to various housing provider contractors for distribution during visits. It is estimated that these will be delivered to over 10,000 premises.

With regards to funding, Members were informed that a successful multi-agency bid was submitted to Liverpool City Safe, with a total of £15,740 secured, of which £3,500 will be provided to MFRA. £450 has been provided by Wirral Council for the hire of a tipper truck, with further tipper trucks being donated by Sefton Council and Knowsley Council.

In relation to Fireworks, Members were advised that they are on sale now, with all traders being required to have a license to store fireworks for sale, which are issued by MFRA. They were informed that inspections are being undertaken by the Fire Protection Teams, who are working alongside Merseyside Police and Trading Standards.

Members were informed that the Arson Teams have been working exceptionally hard to ensure that there are robust arrangements in place with partners. They were also informed that due to the potential increased demand for the Incident Investigation Team (IIT), an extra IIT Officer will be available between 18:00hrs and 00:00hrs on the 7 key dates.

The presentation also highlighted to Members that guidance has been provided to Merseyside Police around MFRA's tolerant approach over the Bonfire period. They were informed that a great deal of calls received by Fire Control are from the Police in relation to Bonfires. Therefore, Corporate Communications have produced guidance for the Police, which provides a list of conditions to consider prior to requesting MFRA attendance at Bonfires, which will hopefully reduce the demand placed on Fire Control.

Questions were raised by Members concerning the reduction in official fireworks displays last year; and whether it had had an impact on the number of incidents. Members were advised that the number of incidents had in fact reduced again last year.

Members made reference to paragraph 3 within the report, where it states that it is recognised that current financial challenges will impact on some of the services our partners have contributed in the past; and expressed concern that this is the case. Members were reassured that we and our partners continue to do fantastic work despite the cuts, however there is no doubt that more could be done if more resources were available.

Further questions were raised by Members in relation to fireworks, specifically around the importation of illegal fireworks; and whether premises that are licensed to sell fireworks, are required to display their license.

Members were informed that should we receive any intelligence around illegal fireworks, we would act alongside partners to intervene. They were advised that they did receive intelligence last year around stolen fireworks, which was acted up on, however no information had been received for this year so far. With regards to the displaying of licenses, Members were advised that all licensed premises will receive a copy of their license, which they could display should they so wish, but there is no obligation for them to do so. They were advised however, that consideration is being given to the production and publication of a list of licensed premises.

A further question was raised around the Street Intervention Teams and why there is no team within the St. Helens District. Members were informed that as youth engagement is not a statutory duty for FRA's, the provision of such teams is predicated on external funding. Therefore, it is our Community Safety partners that pay for the Street Intervention Teams within those areas.

A question was raised by Members around pop up firework shops; and how these are managed. Members were informed that these are dealt with by the Fire Protection Department. They were advised that most are licensed, but that they will receive a visit from the Protection team to ensure that the fireworks are being stored properly; and again, should any intelligence be received to suggest that they are not licensed, or operating properly, they will be investigated.

Members requested that the infographic information within the report and copies of the slides, be provided to them for dissemination to local authorities and partners.

Members Resolved that:

- a) The content of the presentation, be noted.
- b) The content of the report for the Halloween and Bonfire Period 2019, be noted.

**4. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Annual Report April 2018 - March 2019**

Members considered Report CFO/045/19 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the draft Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (ED&I) Annual Report, which contains an update on the progress made against the ED&I Action Plan 2017-2020; and our ED&I objectives for 2017-2020.

The Chair of the Authority reminded Members of their personal responsibility to promote ED&I.

It was requested and agreed that this Agenda Item and Agenda Item 5 – *“Equality Analysis of Workforce and Employment Data as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019”*, be considered together.

With regards to this item, Members attention was drawn to paragraph 4 of the report, which outlines the areas under the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), that public authorities must have due regard to, which include the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

In relation to Agenda Item 5, Members attention was drawn to paragraph 9 of the report, which details some of the key figures contained within the report.

It was highlighted to Members that the total number of staff employed by MFRA, as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, had increased to 1000 (total headcount), which was a 1% increase. The percentage of crew managers had increased to 5.5% (total of 55), whilst the percentage of firefighters fell to 39%, which is due in part to the expansion of the crew manager role. Members were informed that the re-introduction of the crew manager role has been of massive benefit to the operational part of the organisation. They were informed that there has been a great deal of interest in the role since it was re-introduced; and that the process is going extremely well.

With regards to Fire Control staff, Members were advised that numbers have remained consistent; and the percentage of support staff has increased from 31.2% (309 staff) during 2016/17, to 35.5% (355 staff) during 2018/19.

Members were informed that the number of staff disclosing their sexual orientation as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender (LGBT) has increased from 15 in 2016/17 to 22. They were also informed that the number of BAME staff has increased by 25%, from 39 in 2017/18 to 49 in 2018/19. It was stated that although this is moving in the right direction, there is still some way to go before MFRA is reflective of the communities it serves.

Members were advised that a number of Staff Networks will be launched in the New Year; and a member of the Senior Leadership Team will be appointed as a senior Sponsor for each of the protected characteristics, to provide support to those Networks.

With regards to female staff, Members were advised that they now make up 26.5% of the total staffing, which has increased from 23.9% over a 3 year period. It was highlighted to Members that this is well ahead of the English Fire & Rescue Service average of 15.9%.

In terms of the operational staff gender split, Members were advised that 91% (556) are males, and 9% (55) are females, which although this still needs to improve, is higher than the English Fire & Rescue Service female whole time firefighter average of 6.1%.

With regards to the gender pay gap, data as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, shows that across the organisation, the mean gender pay gap is -11.7%, which equates to £1.80 per hour. This shows an improvement on the 2016/17 figure, which was -12.1%. Members were informed that although we are bringing more female operational staff into the organisation, they are coming in at the lower ranks, but hopefully as they start to progress, this figure will improve, albeit this will take time. Members were also advised that officers are currently looking at developing a rapid promotion process, not just for females, but to support all individuals with additional skills.

It was also highlighted to Members that a total of 113 new Members of staff have joined MFRA during 2018/19, 51 operational staff (8 females), 7 Fire Control (6 females) and 55 support staff (23 females). During the same period, there have been 112 individuals leave MFRA, 73 operational staff (3 females), 5 Fire Control staff (all females) and 34 support staff.

Members were also advised that in terms of attendees on Princes Trust Courses run by MFRS, there were 184 during 2018/19, which is an increase on 2017/18, in which there were 116 attendees.

In terms of the value of the Princes Trust course, Members were referred to page 20 of the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Annual Report April 2018 to March 2019, attached as Appendix A to Agenda Item 4. It was highlighted to Members that of the 184 attendees on the course, 164 completed the course; and of those who completed the course, 106 have continued their development in employment, education or training, which is a positive outcome of 57%. They were also informed that of those attendees, 131 were either homeless, ex-offenders, asylum seekers, in care/ leaving care, or part of a homeless family.

Questions were raised by Members regarding the capture of data around transgender individuals; and the language used within the report (male and female etc...) Members were reassured that there are now dedicated senior officer leads for each of the protected characteristics and those officers are looking at how they can better support individuals and the staff networks. It was also confirmed that consideration would be given to the language used within the report to ensure that it is appropriate.

Discussion took place concerning the work around supporting women who are going through the menopause; and raising awareness of men and younger people to better support colleagues.

The Chair of the Authority advised Members that there is a great deal of work being undertaken by the LGA and NFCC, around ED&I. He commented that this is a top priority for MFRA; and that ED&I issues need to be placed at the forefront of policy making.



Members Resolved that:

The attached Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Annual Report, be approved for publication on the Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service (MFRS) website, in order to demonstrate MFRA's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion; and in order to meet its Public Sector Equality duties.

**5. Equality Analysis of Workforce and Employment Data as at 31st March 2019**

Members considered Report CFO/044/19 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 Duties; and in order to allow scrutiny of the service in the discharge of said duty.

It was noted that this item had been considered in conjunction with Agenda Item 4 – *"Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Annual Report – April 2018 – March 2019"*.

Members Resolved that:

- a) The content of the report, be noted.
- b) The report be approved for publication on the Authority's website, in order to demonstrate its commitment to equality and diversity; and to meet its Public Sector Equality Duties.

**6. Water Rescue PPE**

Members considered Report CFO/054/19 of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, concerning the outcome of the tender process for the North West (NW) for Water Rescue Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Members were provided with an overview of the report, which highlighted that the previous contract for Water Rescue PPE expired in August 2019. As such, in June 2019, MFRA undertook a further competition process on behalf of the NW FRS's, under a YPO (Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation) Framework.

Members were advised that the specifications for the items, had been updated to reflect the latest standards.

The high level weightings applied for evaluation of the bids, was highlighted to Members, as was the total estimated spend. However, Members were informed that the potential expenditure is subject to change, depending on the actual requirements during the life of the contract.

Members were advised that 3 companies have been successful across the lots, as detailed within the report. They were also advised that if approved, any NW authorities requiring Water Rescue PPE, will call off this contract.

A question was raised around whether other regions would be able to call off this contract. Members were informed that this particular contract is for the NW only, however other regions would be able to buy off the YPO Framework if they so wished.

Members Resolved that:

- a) The outcome of the tender process, as detailed within the report, be noted.
- b) The award of contract for the various lots, to the companies as detailed within paragraph 5 of the report, be approved.

**7. Disposal of West Kirby**

***This Minute contains EXEMPT information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.***

Close

Date of next meeting Thursday, 21 May 2020

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_