

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	FULL AUTHORITY		
DATE:	21ST MAY 2020	REPORT NO:	CFO/021/20
PRESENTING OFFICER	ACTING MONITORING OFFICER		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	RIA GROVES	REPORT AUTHOR:	KELLY KELLAWAY – DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER
OFFICERS CONSULTED:			
TITLE OF REPORT:	LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION SUBSCRIPTION 2020/21		
APPENDICES:	APPENDIX A	LETTER FROM LGA CHIEF EXECUTIVE MARK LLOYD	

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Members of Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority's continued membership of the Local Government Association (LGA) for 2020/21.

Recommendation

2. That Members;
 - a. Note the Authority's continued membership of the LGA, for 2020/21;
 - b. Note that a 2.5% loyalty discount is applied to all Fire and Rescue Authorities not on notice;
 - c. Note that the Authority have signed up to the LGA's direct debit payment scheme for 2020/21, in order to receive an additional 2.5% discount.
 - d. Note the content of the report.

Introduction and Background

3. Members will be aware that the Authority has been a long standing member of the LGA, which is a national membership body for local authorities, that works on behalf of members to support, promote and improve local government.
4. The core membership of the LGA comprises of 335 of the 339 councils in England. They also operate an Associate Scheme, for organisations whose

purpose and objectives are aligned with their own, which includes fire and rescue authorities.

5. The LGA are a politically-led, cross-party organisation that works on behalf of local authorities to ensure that local government has a strong, credible voice with national Government. They also aim to influence and set the political agenda on issues that matter to local authorities.
6. The LGA provides a range of practical support on a free of charge or subsidised basis, which includes leadership programmes, peer challenge, the LGA's benchmarking service "LG Inform"; and programmes tailored to specific areas, such as fire and rescue.
7. The LGA has a Fire Services Management Committee, which represents the views and concerns of the fire sector, working on the future direction of the fire and rescue service.
8. In addition, the LGA produce a range of publications, responses, briefing documents and guides, relevant to the fire sector.
9. The LGA also provide the secretariat to the Employers' side of the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services, the Middle Managers Negotiating Body, and the NJC for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services.
10. The LGA has provided guidance and has acted as a single voice for local government when responding to significant events, including during this current climate of Covid-19 and in response to Grenfell Tower..
11. The LGA have previously stated that they are committed to keeping the cost of membership as low as possible; and membership subscriptions had been frozen for 8 years in a row. However, due to increasing costs over that period, for 2020/21 a 2% increase in subscriptions will be applied. This would take the cost of subscription for MFRA for 2020/21 to £11,230.47.
12. The LGA have confirmed that they will again be offering a 2.5% loyalty discount for fire and rescue authorities who are not on notice. With this discount applied, the total for MFRA for 2020/21, would be £10,949.71.
13. Previously, the LGA have offered an additional 2.5% prompt payment discount to authorities who pay the subscription fee in full within a specified timeframe. However, in order to provide a smoother and more cost effective payment process, for 2020/21, the LGA have introduced a new direct debit scheme. For all authorities joining the direct debit scheme, a 2.5% discount will be applied, which will replace the previous 2.5% early payment discount. For MFRA, this additional discount would take the total subscription fee down to £10,669 for 2020/21.

14. In order to sign up to the direct debit scheme and receive the additional 2.5% discount, the LGA required completed direct debit mandate forms to be returned by Friday 24th April 2020.
15. Given the current situation around the COVID-19 pandemic , there has not been a suitable opportunity this year, for a formal report to be brought to Members for approval of continued membership of the LGA; and sign up to the direct debit scheme, before the deadline date of 24th April 2020.
16. As per Standing Order 17.2 – Urgent Business, within the Authority’s Constitution, which states: “*In certain circumstances where this is not possible with the timescales required the Chief Fire Officer of the Authority in consultation with the Chair of the Authority and such other Members as the Chair may consider necessary may discharge these functions*”; an email was sent to all Members of MFRA advising of the Chair of the Authority’s intention to approve continued membership to the LGA; and sign up to the direct debit scheme, under these urgency provisions.
17. All Members were provided with an opportunity to respond before the deadline of 24th April 2020, should they have any objections. No objections were raised, and as such, confirmation of MFRA’s continued membership of the LGA for 2020/21; and intention to join the direct debit payment scheme, along with the relevant information, was provided to the LGA by the 24th April 2020 deadline.
18. Although no objections were raised by Members, some Members did indicate that although they were happy to approve continued membership of the LGA for 2020/21, they would like to be provided with some additional information regarding the benefits of LGA membership, to assure themselves that it represents value for money for MFRA. As such, some additional information regarding the LGA has been included within this report at paragraphs 3 to 10.
19. A letter from Mark Lloyd, Chief Executive of the LGA, is attached at Appendix A, which details the wide range of issues which the LGA have worked with fire and rescue authorities to address.

Equality and Diversity Implications

20. The LGA has requested that each of its member authorities appoints a dedicated Equality and Inclusion Champion. For 2019/20, Cllr Jan Grace was appointed as MFRA’s Equality and Inclusion Champion.
21. The LGA have also formed an Equality and Inclusion Champion national network for fire and rescue authorities. This national network enables the sharing of views, best practice and discussion of issues, with other similar organisations, which can also assist with the influencing of national policy.

Staff Implications

22. There are no direct staff implications relating to this report.

Legal Implications

23. The National Fire Lawyers Group receives regular updates from the LGA; and therefore continued membership would assist this valuable service.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

24. By taking advantage of the direct debit payment scheme, the total cost of LGA membership for MFRA for 2020/21 is £10.669. This cost can be met from within existing budgets.
25. It is important to note that additional costs are likely to be incurred for travel and accommodation (if required) when attending LGA Conferences, however these costs can be contained within existing budgets and are covered by the Members Allowance Scheme.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

26. There are no direct implications within this report relating to risk management, health and safety or the environment.

Contribution to Our Mission: *Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Firefighters*

27. Membership of the LGA allows the Authority to contribute to, and benefit from the work of the LGA in championing the local government sector.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

LGA **Local Government Association**