

<b>MERSEYSIDE FIRE &amp; RESCUE AUTHORITY</b>			
<b>MEETING OF THE:</b>	<b>COMMUNITY SAFETY &amp; PROTECTION COMMITTEE</b>		
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>2<sup>ND</sup> FEBRUARY 2021</b>	<b>REPORT NO:</b>	<b>CFO/006/21</b>
<b>PRESENTING OFFICER</b>	<b>CHIEF FIRE OFFICER</b>		
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	<b>AM GARY OAKFORD</b>	<b>REPORT AUTHOR:</b>	<b>GM BEN RYDER</b>
<b>OFFICERS CONSULTED:</b>	<b>MIKE BURATTI- COMMUNITY SAFETY COORDINATOR</b> <b>JOHN FIELDING – BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE MANAGER</b> <b>JOE CUNLIFFE – STATION MANAGER</b> <b>LAUREN WOODWARD – STATION MANAGER</b> <b>PROTECTION OFFICERS</b>		
<b>TITLE OF REPORT:</b>	<b>BONFIRE REPORT 2020</b>		

<b>APPENDICES:</b>	<b>APPENDIX A:</b>	<b>MFRS OPS INFORMATION NOTE</b>
		<b>27.20 OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE FOR CREWS DURING BONFIRE PERIOD</b>
	<b>APPENDIX B:</b>	<b>BONFIRE SUMMARY REPORT</b>
	<b>APPENDIX C:</b>	<b>SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN FIGURES</b>

### **Purpose of Report**

1. To inform Members of the outcomes of Bonfire period 2020 and the continued challenge of deliberate secondary fires.

### **Recommendation**

2. That Members note the content of the report and the impact that the COVID 19 pandemic had on the delivery of the Bonfire Plan 2020.

### **Introduction and Background**

3. This Bonfire Period for 2020 seen a slight increase of 25 incidents across Merseyside in comparison to year 2019 that the service seen its lowest reported figures.

4.

<b>District</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>% Difference</b>
Knowsley	43 (2.9)	33 (2.2)	<b>-10 (-0.7)</b>	<b>-23.3%</b>
Liverpool	116 (2.3)	126 (2.5)	<b>10 (0.2)</b>	<b>8.6%</b>
<i>Liverpool North</i>	77	77	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
<i>Liverpool South</i>	39	49	<b>10</b>	<b>25.6%</b>
Sefton	19 (0.7)	32 (1.2)	<b>13 (0.5)</b>	<b>68.4%</b>
St Helens	35 (1.9)	31 (1.7)	<b>-4 (-0.2)</b>	<b>-11.4%</b>
Wirral	30 (0.9)	46 (1.4)	<b>16 (0.5)</b>	<b>53.3%</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>243 (1.7)</b>	<b>268 (1.9)</b>	<b>25 (0.2)</b>	<b>10.3%</b>

5. It is recognised that a significant increase in calls for service is received over the Halloween and Bonfire period. This is directly linked to a rise in anti-social behaviour and sale of fireworks over the period. In order to limit the demand, an extensive plan for the period was formulated to help reduce calls for service, the numbers of fires and instances of anti-social behaviour which adversely affect Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service and the communities of Merseyside.

6. The Prevention Directorate planning for Bonfire 2020 commenced in June with regular meetings being convened with key partners. Merseyside Police as part of Operation Banger led the multi-agency operation which co-ordinates Police, Fire and Local Authority activity over the Halloween and Bonfire period. This includes monthly Silver meetings chaired by Merseyside Police at the JCC, Bridle Road. These monthly meetings involved all Police Commanders responsible for implementation of Operation Banger and representatives from MF&RS and other agencies such as North West Ambulance Service.
7. This year MFRA issued 182 licences from retailers to store and sell fireworks. Officers inspected premises to ensure suitable and sufficient action had been undertaken by the retailers to comply with safe storage and guidance given on the selling of fireworks. A further inspection and compliance programme was undertaken by Protection Officers for 74 premises including complaints resulting in the following outcomes, over 50kg of fireworks were seized with a value of £4000. 3 other premises were visited which resulted in recommendations being made to the license holder.
8. MFRS Corporate Communications Team produced a Bonfire Communications Strategy including a series of infographics, a new Bonfire Leaflet and 2 new videos were created in relation to the dangers of issuing fireworks and also regarding the sales and purchase of fireworks. The campaign included press releases promoting the key messages at key times over the reporting period. The City Safe Board paid for a social media campaign which enabled Corporate Communications to geographically target key safety messages via social media to high demand areas and to social media users who do not routinely follow MFRS social media outlets. Members of the public were also encouraged to report bonfire debris via our social media outlets and website which was monitored by Corporate Communications.
9. From Monday 19th October until Friday 6th November, MFRS had the use of 5 tipper trucks across Merseyside. These were staffed by the Prevention Directorate (Home Safety Advocates and Apprentices) in order to remove the build-up of bonfire material. Our staff removed over 52 tonnes of material.

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### **Impact of COVID19**

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10. The Liverpool City Region moved into the Very High Tier 3 Level of COVID alert from 14<sup>th</sup> October 2020. Full UK Lockdown was initiated on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2020.
11. The COVID19 pandemic had a significant impact on organised firework displays. The traditional displays, e.g. River of Light and Sparks in the Park in St Helens were cancelled, these would under normal operating conditions attracted a combined attendance in excess of 120,000 people, a range of other smaller community led displays were also cancelled. This led to a significant increase in the domestic use of fireworks.
12. A range of other diversionary activity that would under normal circumstances support the reduction of Anti-Social Behaviour during the bonfire period were also significantly disrupted due to the pandemic with only limited online diversionary activities (such as virtual DJ's).
13. In most cases MFRS staff were not able to have a physical presence in schools. To overcome this the message to young people was delivered through Corporate Communications who created an animation that was sent to schools electronically along with an electronic bonfire leaflet for school websites and parent/guardian apps.

14. Due to the COVID19 pandemic, MFRA adapted its normal tolerant approach, which is to risk assess the bonfire allowing it to burn providing it is safe and appropriate to do so with members of the community observing safely. This year our adopted approach was to extinguish the bonfire(s) to reduce social gatherings and limit the associated spread of the virus through community transmission – a public health approach.
15. MFRS crews used the “4E” model in their approach to dealing with the public. The “4E” model was adapted from the policing model of Engage, Explain, Encourage and Enforce. Enforce was replaced with Extinguish to suit MFRS priorities. Appendix A gives further explanation.
16. Merseyside Police supported fire crews by attending fires to disperse people allowing fire crews to extinguish bonfires safely. Requests by Merseyside Police to extinguish bonfires were “tagged” to reflect that the request was made as a result of the police enforcing COVID19 guidance. 43 incidents were tagged by crews to reflect this. A direct result of changing from the tolerant approach resulted in an increase in the number of deliberate secondary fires that were extinguished by MFRA in the reporting period 4th to 7th November 2020.

## Performance

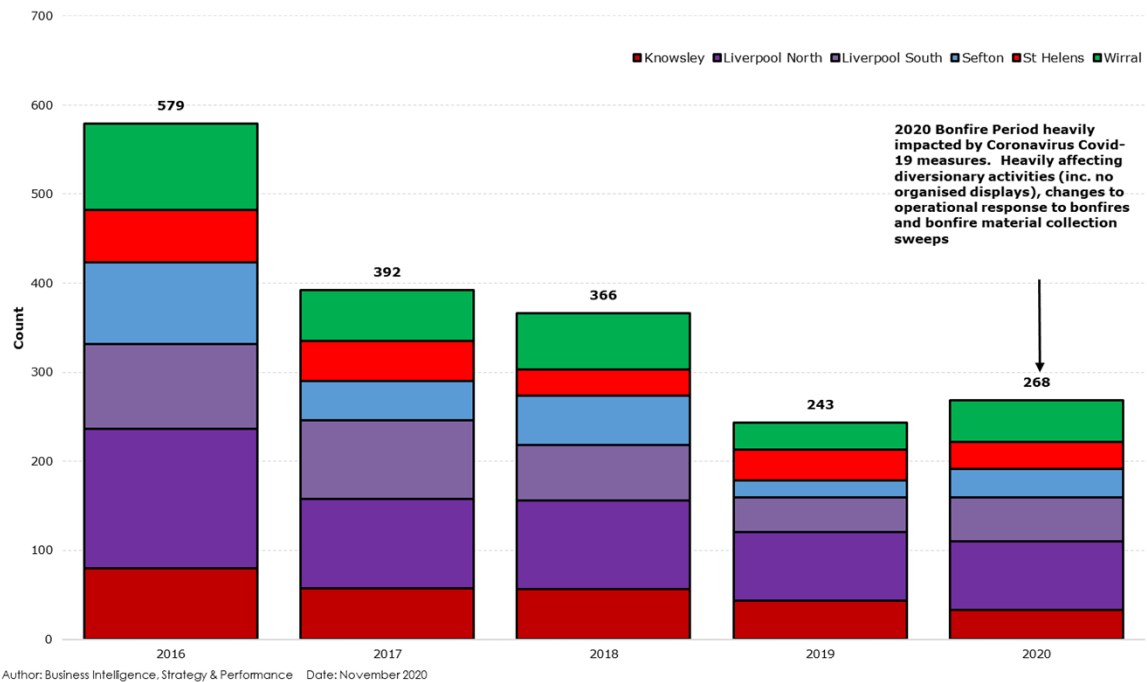
17. Despite the unique challenges the Region and Service were faced this year performance has been maintained in line with the recent reductions experienced over the period and cumulatively for the year (2019/20).

Year		Deliberate Fires	Secondary	% Difference
2018/19	Bonfire Period	243		
2019/20	Bonfire Period	268**		10% increase
2018/19	(April - October)	1891		
2019/20	(April - October)	1982		5% increase

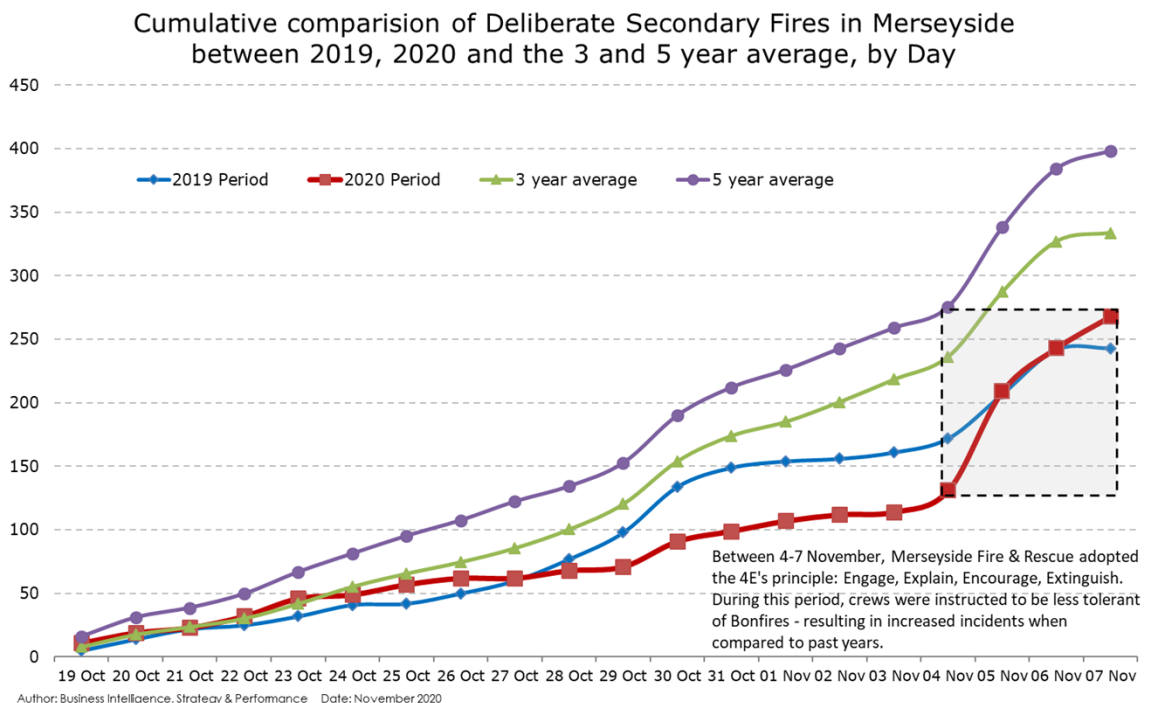
\*\*43 incidents were due to Public Health Approach

18. This is attributable to the exemplary work done by our staff across our communities. This level of performance has not been experienced by all agencies for example please see Police ASB data below.

	ASB 2019	ASB 2020	% Difference
April - October	18936	28788	52% increase
19 October - 7 November	2598	3856	48% increase



19. This chart identifies that during the 2020 bonfire period the number of deliberate secondary fire incidents attended by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service was 268. This is a minor increase of 25 incidents (10.3%) from 2019. When compared historically to the 2016 period there has still been an overall reduction of 311 incidents (-53.7%). Over the 5-year period, 2020 saw the second lowest total overall.



20. This chart provides a cumulative analysis of deliberate secondary fire incidents through the 2020 period, contrasting it with: 2019, as well as the 3 and 5 year averages. The chart shows that though there was an increase between the 2020 and 2019 bonfire periods, when compared to historical averages, performance was still positive.

21. The 4 E's approach particularly affected the above highlighted period as crews were expected to extinguish all bonfires. 43 incidents during the bonfire reporting period have been tagged "Bonfire Covid". These were incidents that during normal conditions (tolerant approach) would not have been extinguished.

22. The Service attended a number incidents that involved the misuse of Fireworks.

District	2019	2020	Difference
<b>Wirral</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>-3</b>
<b>Liverpool</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>+6</b>
<i>Liverpool North</i>	3	7	+4
<i>Liverpool South</i>	2	4	+2
<b>Sefton</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-2</b>
<b>Knowsley</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>St Helens</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-1</b>
<b>Merseyside Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>0</b>

23. The paid for Social media campaign, which was carried out over the bonfire period, highlighted an estimated reach of 1,594,802 people utilising Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. We believe this had a positive impact on the number of incidents that were attended. It must also be noted that our Corporate Communications Team worked with Police and Local Authority Communications Teams, in relation to social media to ensure consistency in key safety messages. Social media was also utilised to gather intelligence and on the Wirral, intelligence received in relation to an organised firework/bonfire event lead to Merseyside Police issuing three £10,000 fines to the event organisers.

### Equality and Diversity Implications

24. An EIA was completed and available on the portal.
25. Chart 5\* graphically illustrates the link between deliberate secondary fire incidents and levels of deprivation. The chart clearly identifies that more deliberate fire incidents occur in areas of high deprivation as opposed to areas of least deprivation.
26. Table 5\* provides a historical look at the top 10 wards for deliberate secondary fires over the last 10 years. The table shows evidence that certain wards consistently see high numbers of incidents from year to year, particularly the wards of: Kirkdale, Everton, Speke-Garston, Clubmoor and Birkenhead & Tranmere (These are all deprived areas).
27. This enabled us to target resources to those areas in the build up to the main reporting period to remove fly tipping and engaging with young people with the Street Intervention Team in high demand wards (targeted youth intervention).

\*these tables are contained within the Summary Report for Incident Activity during 2020 Bonfire Period produced by Business Intelligence Manager John Fielding

### Staff Implications

28. A number of directorates and departments contributed significantly during the bonfire period. This provided the Prevention Directorate with the ability to deliver the high performance with thanks to

- Home Safety – provided additional staffing.
- Youth Engagement - provided staffing & consultation with Children & Young People.
- Protection – firework legislation compliance and enforcement.
- Corporate Communications – Communications and Media Strategy.

- Legal – advice and guidance (RIPA, 4E's, Fireworks)
  - Operational Response – Ops Info Note, Advice and guidance, High visibility patrols, engagement from stations and adoption of 4 E model
  - Operational Preparedness – Covid tag, Ops Info Note
  - An additional IIT officer was available at times of high demand on the key nights.
  - Fire Control - additional control room operators were utilised due to increased high demand over key nights.
29. MFRS staff supported the Trojan Fire Appliance, this was staffed on key nights (31<sup>st</sup> October and the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> November 2020). The Trojan Fire Appliance is a covert fire appliance staffed by MFRS and Merseyside Police (see paragraph 46).
30. The Liverpool, Knowsley, Sefton and Wirral Street Intervention Teams worked throughout the reporting period in high demand areas to engage with young people and local communities about the associated dangers of the period including social distancing.
31. The Operational Support Room was utilised to support co-ordination of prevention, protection and response assets.

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### **Legal Implications**

32. The provisions of The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Local COVID-19 Alert Level) (Very High) (England) Regulations 2020 come into force on 14 October 2020 with Liverpool City Region were placed into the Very High Tier 3 Level which enforced the tightest restrictions. This was followed shortly after by a further [Full UK Lockdown](#) enacted on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2020. The impact of the Regulations are detailed within the report however the Authority continued to respond to incidents and extinguish bonfires within its powers under the Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004,
33. Regulatory Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) training has previously been given to key staff prior to the bonfire period. The Authority fully complied with its legal requirements when engaging the Trojan Fire Appliance to assist during this period while other partners exercised their own legal powers to help achieve the proposed bonfire plan.
34. To satisfy the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, all staff during the tipper tucks have received a driver validation by the Driving School and all staff on the tipper trucks are manual handling trained. The appropriate insurance provisions were in place to ensure the trucks could be utilised to their most effective capacity.
35. Under the Explosives Regulations 2014 and the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, Protection Officers as the enforcing authority exercised their powers and visited retailers storing fireworks for sale to ensure compliance with legislation.

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### **Financial Implications & Value for Money**

36. All costs for delivering the bonfire plan were met from planned budgets or supported by external partners.



37. The Liverpool Citysafe Board provided additional funding (totalling £6000). This enabled the hire of a tipper truck, a social media campaign and additional Street Intervention Team deployments.
38. Wirral Council, Sefton Council, and St Helens Council hired tipper trucks to be used by MFRS during the bonfire period. Knowsley Council loaned a tipper truck to MFRS.

### **Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications**

39. In considering the risk management implications for staff operating within Merseyside during key nights, a decision was made to utilise the Operational Support Room. This allowed for monitoring and safe management of staff across Merseyside who were not riding fire appliances.
40. In order to reduce the impact and noticeable increase of fly tipping, tipper trucks operated pre bonfire to remove hazardous waste or combustible materials to minimise the impact on the environment and the safety of MFRS staff.
41. A post Bonfire night sweep took place on the morning of 6th November. This involved fire crews patrolling their station areas in order to extinguish smouldering bonfires in known fire locations. Appliances remained available for redirection by Fire Control. This enabled tipper trucks to remove remaining debris from bonfires.
42. The Bonfire plan identified 6 key nights where demands on MFRS were anticipated to increase, these were 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> October and the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> November.
43. The Trojan Fire Appliance was stood up proactively on 30<sup>th</sup> October and 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> November supported by Merseyside Police. During its deployment, the Trojan Fire Appliance was mobilised to 4 incidents. The Trojan Fire Appliance carried out high visibility patrols of high demand areas and also visited Fire Stations to engage with Fire Crews who had recently experienced violence at work incidents to explain the concept of the Trojan Fire Appliance.
44. The 4 E model was adopted to mitigate large gatherings in order to mitigate the spread of the virus and to aid the adherence of COVID19 legislation.

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

45. The delivery of the Bonfire Plan aims to limit and reduce the threat of the number of Anti-Social Behaviour incidents and deliberate fires across Merseyside.
46. Its aim is to reduce the risk of attacks on firefighters through education and engagement. It also promotes key safety messages to allow the public to have a safe Halloween and bonfire period free from harm and injury.
47. The plan prepared for the anticipated increase in calls for the service by working with partners and key stakeholders; prevent crime and fires which impact on MFRS response to incidents; protect the most vulnerable who may be victims of fire or firework incidents plus educating young persons; and pursue those who attack firefighters or staff of MFRS.
48. 4 E model in relation to bonfires. A good example of this was on 4<sup>th</sup> November on Meadow Crescent, Woodchurch, Wirral. A fire crew was called to a large bonfire event which included a large gathering of people. Operational Crews, supported by Merseyside Police adopted the 4 E approach which resulted the

Merseyside Police dispersing the large crowd to enable Fire Crews to extinguish the fire.

49. MFRS through the pre-planning and interventions noted in this report maintained its attendance standard to life risk incidents throughout the bonfire period.

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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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None

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## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

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<b>IIT</b>	Incident Investigation Team
<b>JCC</b>	Joint Control Centre (Bridle Road)
<b>MFRA</b>	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
<b>MFRS</b>	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service
<b>OIC</b>	Officer in Charge
<b>OSR</b>	Operational Support Room
<b>RIPA</b>	Regulatory Investigative Powers Act
<b>S&amp;P</b>	Strategy and Performance
<b>SHQ</b>	Service Headquarters
<b>SPOC</b>	Single Point of Contact