

# MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

15 OCTOBER 2020

## MINUTES

**Present:** Cllr Leslie T. Byrom CBE (Chair) Councillors  
Linda Maloney, Barrington, Angela Coleman, Emily Spurrell,  
Lynne Thompson, Janet Grace, Brian Kenny, Lesley Rennie,  
James Roberts, Jean Stapleton, Andrew Makinson,  
Steff O'Keeffe, Lisa Preston, Brame and Anthony Boyle

**Also Present:**

**Apologies of absence were received from:** Cllr  
Doreen Knight, Cllr Paul Tweed and Cllr Edna Finneran

### 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.

Resolved that:

- a) The following declarations of interest were made by individual Members in relation to items of business on the Agenda:
  - Cllr Lesley Rennie declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest, in relation to Agenda Item 6 – “**Donation of Fire Appliances**”, due to being a Trustee of Operation Sabre.
  - Cllr Byrom declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest, in the following items:
    - Agenda Item 6 – “**Donation of Fire Appliances**”, due to having connections with St. John’s Ambulance.
    - Agenda Item 8 – “**Reservists**”, due to being on the Board of Reserve Forces.
- b) no additional items of business were determined by the Chair to be considered as matters of urgency; 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.

**2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Authority, held on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020, were approved as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

**3. Change of Membership of the Authority 2020/21**

Members considered Report CFO/050/20 of the Acting Monitoring Officer, concerning a change to the membership of Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority (MFRA) for the remainder of the 2020/21 Municipal Year, following the Annual General Meeting of Wirral Borough Council.

Members were given a brief introduction of the report highlighting the appointment of Councillor Allan Brame to MFRA on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

Members resolved that:  
the content of this report, be noted.

**4. Change in Political Balance of MFRA for 2020/21**

Members considered Report CFO/051/20 of the Acting Monitoring Officer, concerning a change in the political balance of Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority (MFRA) for the remainder of the 2020/21 Municipal Year, as a result of changes within Wirral Borough Council, at its Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

Members were informed about the number of seats on Committees due to the change in the political balance and were advised of the new Committee Membership. The following Committees were modified; Community Safety & Protection, Audit, Scrutiny and the Member Development & Engagement Group.

Members Resolved That:

- (a) the change in political balance of the Authority, as a result of changes within Wirral Borough Council at its AGM on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020, be noted.
- (b) the number of seats on each Committee to be allocated to each political group in accordance with the political balance regulations, be determined as a result of the change; and
- (c) the Members who are to be appointed to Committees, in accordance with the wishes of the relevant political group in respect of seats allocated to that group, be confirmed (Committee Membership Template is attached at Appendix A on Agenda).

**5. Amendments to Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority's Constitution 2020/21**

Members considered Report CFO/056/20 of the Acting Monitoring Officer, concerning the proposed amendments to Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority's (MFRA) Constitution 2020/21.

Members were advised of the changes made to the Constitution in Article 3 under Part 2 and Part 4.

Members Resolved That:

the changes to MFRA's Constitution for 2020/21, as detailed within this report, be approved.

**12. Donation of Fire Appliances**

Members considered report CFO/054/20 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the donation of the Fire Appliances identified within this report.

Members were given an overview of the report and it was highlighted that the donation of these appliances to the two charities will be of great value for them, compared to the scrap value of the vehicles.

Members welcomed this donation and shared their support for the two charities.

Members resolved that:

- a. the donation of one Scania B Type appliance to Operation Sabre, be approved.
- b. the donation of one Scania B Type appliance to St Johns Corps, Malta, be approved.

**7. Fire Protection Government Grant Funding**

Members considered Report CFO/053/20 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the grant funding received from Government to drive improvement in the Authority's Protection function and the recommendations contained in this report on how the grant funding will be used to bolster our fire protection capability and delivery, that will align with our Integrated Risk Management Plan and Risk Based Inspection Programme. At the same time, enable the Authority to deliver against the demands of the BRR programme.

Members were given a brief introduction of the report informing them how the future demand of the Protection function has proved to be a successful decision and has improved productivity significantly.

Members applauded the report and the work that the Protection Department does.

Members Resolved That:

The following be approved:

Building Risk Review Programme

- a) The proposal to establish a temporary team consisting of 1x Station Manager, 1x Lead Inspector (grade 9), 1x Co-ordinating inspector (grade 9) and 1x Admin Support Officer (grade 4) to deliver the programme by December 2021.

Protection Uplift Programme

- a) The proposal to recruit 6x temporary full time Fire Safety Inspectors (grade 8) and a Fire Engineering Manager (grade 12) to increase resilience and secure future succession planning.
- b) In addition to the initial recruitment costs the Fire Safety Inspectors will be required to attend the relevant training courses and achieve Skills for Justice Level 3 and 4 Fire Safety Inspector qualifications. A newly recruited Fire Engineer will be required to attend UCLAN on a part time basis to achieve a fire engineering degree.

Infrastructure Fund

- a) The proposal to invest in suitable ICT hardware and software to support the efficiency of our inspectors and to ensure the maintenance of skills through effective online training and communication.
- b) The provision of regular training events and CPD seminars to maintain the competence of our staff.
- c) The provision of additional service vehicles will also be required at different locations to support the mobility of our staff to attend visits and audits.
- d) In addition to the Protection requirements, infrastructure expenditure should also be incurred for the purposes of:
  - Ensuring smoke hoods are appropriately available on front line appliances. These have already been purchased with two being available on all frontline pumping appliances.
  - Providing a local Grenfell recommendations co-ordination function, so NFCC and FRSs can track and evidence progress being made against the recommendations.
  - Providing other locally determined activity to respond to the Grenfell recommendations and improve resilience to major incidents and

infrastructure. This can include upgrades to control room systems to allow the ability to connect to Multi-Agency Incident Transfer (MAIT) system.

## 8. **Reservists**

Members considered report CFO/052/20 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the success of the Authority's policies supporting staff who wish to be part of the Reserved Armed Forces and consider expanding the opportunities currently in place for number of registered reservists.

Members were given a brief overview of the report informing them that a Reserve Force (FR) member is to attend up to 30 days of training per year, made up of evening and weekend training, along with attendance for a continuous 15 day period each year known as annual camp. In terms of impact of Reservists to the Authority, approval to join the RF does not automatically entitle the employee to leave to attend training camps or other RF activities. All leave approval is subject to staffing exigencies. The Authority currently supports all registered and accepted employees of MFRS with one weeks paid leave and one week unpaid leave to attend annual training camp. This is administered by Time & Resource Management and permission must be sought prior to attendance.

Members resolved that:

an additional 10 Grey Book (20 in total) and 3 Green Book (5 in total) staff are allowed to register as reservists, be approved.

## 9. **Agile Working Policy**

Members considered report CFO/057/20 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the learning from the pandemic during the lockdown period, particularly in relation to the flexibilities afforded to staff through working differently, and to relay the knock on benefits to the service in relation to efficiency and effectiveness.

Members were given a brief overview of the report, identifying the benefits of Agile Working for employees and the Authority.

Members asked if employees that are working from home feel isolated and if they did, asked how Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority (MFRA) are supporting them. Members were advised that communication is the key here and were informed that line managers keep in contact with staff, whether at home or in the office. During this tiered restriction period, support staff are currently working back at home partially, but some staff would prefer to work in the offices more often, which is supported, especially if staff are feeling isolated. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (MFRA) supports its staffs wellbeing during this time and all premises are safe and Covid secure. Members were reminded that

MFRA has an excellent Occupational Health team and a 24 hour external support team whom they can contact at any time to discuss any problems.

Members resolved that:

- a. the content of the report, be noted
- b. the adoption of the Agile Working Policy and supporting Guidance note, be approved.

#### **10. COVID-19 MFRS update**

Members considered report CFO/049/20 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the activity that has taken place in Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (MFRA) since the last COVID-19 update in May 2020.

Members were given an overview of the report highlighting the things that have been done to make premises and service vehicles as safe as possible, including the installation of hand sanitiser dispensers across the whole estate; installation of COVID-19 signage across the whole estate; a phased return of the workforce to monitor and amend any arrangements as required; and issuing guidance on occupancy levels and conditions for use of Authority vehicles by staff.

MFRA have also ensured the required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) & other equipment necessary to maintain a COVID-19 safe working environment was available, including the relevant type of PPE required in order for employees to continue to work and serve the community for Response, Prevention and Protection activities.

Members added that with the busy bonfire period upcoming that they know how hard all staff work and are extremely thankful.

Members asked if there had been lobbying for Fire Fighters to receive regular COVID 19 testing and were informed that Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service (MFRS) have access to regular testing. Members were advised that Emergency Services are prioritised with regards to testing and other medical immunisations such as the flu jab. Members were told that MFRS have done a great job supporting the community in response to the pandemic and that we are ready to do more to help.

Members Resolved That:

the content of this report, be noted.

#### **11. TDA Development**

Members considered report CFO/055/20 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning support for the development of a Training Development Academy ('TDA') and fire station on a new site rather than develop the existing site.

Members will recall the possibility of building a new training facility/station as part of the 2021 -2024 Integrated Risk Management Planning cycle was discussed at the recent Members Strategy Day and that any proposal would be subject to Members receiving a detailed proposal including a full business case and funding statement, before any final commitment to a new site was agreed.

Members were given a brief overview of the report emphasising that the current TDA and Croxteth Fire Station location is landlocked with no site expansion possible. The site in which these buildings are based is in need of significant re-development and continuing refurbishment works. Although the refurbishing is feasible, the physical limitations of the current site wouldn't enable the provision of more modern facilities that the authority requires to train all staff and external stakeholders.

Members were advised that a new site with a larger footprint would enable the facility to include a bespoke training facility with scope to include a Fire Behaviour Unit, TDA Building including offices, an indoor training facility for use in adverse weather and for demonstration purposes for the local community, a new 5 bay Fire Station, provision of external training which will also incorporate added provision for National Resilience (NR) focused training requirements as a minimum... but to name a few.

Members asked what impact a new build would have on the current site, for example the cost of repairs to the current building. Members were advised that there are no immediate repairs required and any that will be done will be of minimal cost. There could be a possibility of significant costs for repairs but Members were reassured that there would be ongoing costs either way. The new site is within range of the current site and training will continue to take place, bringing in revenue.

Members praised the work that the Training and Development Academy do on site.

Members resolved that:

- a. the deferral of the refurbishment of the current TDA site and instruct the CFO to look for a new site for the TDA, be approved;
- b. the CFO be instructed to report back to Members' with a proposal for a new site including a full business case and funding proposal;
- c. the use of the capital reserve to fund any pump priming work ahead of the detailed proposal, be approved;
- d. power be delegated to the CFO to make conditional bids for potential sites if the deadlines for bids means that it is not possible to get members' formal approval beforehand (note: part of any condition associated with a bid is that Authority approval would be required if the bid is successful);

- e. a conditional bid (non-binding) had been made in consultation with the Chair of the Authority on a preferred new site as the deadline for bids was 25th September 2020 and a number of competitive bids had been received in relation to the site, be noted;
- f. a more detailed report subject to the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review and following any response to the conditional bid which would ultimately indicate the feasibility of the proposal, be requested;
- g. any progress would be subject to public consultation and Authority approval, be noted; and
- h. any proposal would be captured within the 2021-2024 Integrated Risk Management Plan, be noted

Close

Date of next meeting Thursday, 20 May 2021

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

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