

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY		
DATE:	30 JUNE 2021	REPORT NO:	CFO/039/21
PRESENTING OFFICER	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	DEB APPLETON	REPORT AUTHOR:	JACKIE SUTTON
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TEAM		
TITLE OF REPORT:	IRMP 2021-24 POST CONSULTATION REPORT		

APPENDICES:	APPENDIX 1:	DRAFT IRMP 2021-24
	APPENDIX 2:	ORS CONSULTATION REPORT
	APPENDIX 3:	ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS
	APPENDIX 4:	FOA RESPONSE
	APPENDIX 5:	FBU RESPONSE
	APPENDIX 6:	GMFRS RESPONSE
	APPENDIX 7:	CONSULTATION DISTRIBUTION LIST
	APPENDIX 8:	IRMP EIA 2021-24
	APPENDIX 9:	NW CCG RESPONSE

Purpose of Report

1. To request that Members, consider the outcomes of public/stakeholder consultation on the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2021-24 and to seek approval for the publication of the final post-consultation version, which will be designed before publication.

Recommendation

2. That Members;
 - a. Consider whether the responses to consultation have been adequately considered by officers and are reflected within the IRMP 2021-24 (Appendix 1), where appropriate (shown with yellow highlights).
 - b. Note that the proposals within this IRMP have been subject to extensive public consultation. The outcomes of this consultation has been attached as appendices to this report.
 - c. Note the changes which have been made following the comments made (highlighted in yellow).
 - d. Approve the IRMP for 2021-24 and its implementation - which will see further increases in fire engine availability, building on the 2019/21 IRMP Supplement.
 - e. Approve the IRMP supplement 2021-24 for publication in a designed format.

Introduction and Background

3. It is a requirement of the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2018 to produce an IRMP. This IRMP has been written to ensure compliance with the National Framework.

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4. Merseyside FRA's IRMP is a medium term plan that evaluates progress made as a result of previous IRMPs and captures future aspirations and the strategic direction for the Authority in order to deliver its Mission: Safer, Stronger Communities; Safe Effective Firefighters.
 5. The IRMP and supplement deal in a strategic way with the implications of risk, demand and vulnerability in Merseyside, in the context of the resources available to the Authority.
 6. Subject to approval of the IRMP supplement 2021-24, the Chief Fire Officer will exercise his delegated responsibility in the management of any changes resulting from it.
 7. Future reports to the Authority will contain the detail on any such changes resulting from the IRMP.

Consultation

8. Since the draft IRMP 2021-24 was approved at the Budget Authority meeting on 25th February 2021 a twelve-week consultation process has taken place (1st March to 24th May) and the outcomes from this are summarised below and reported within Appendices 2 to 8.
9. The consultation process included the following:
 - a) Publication of the draft IRMP 2021-24 on our website
 - b) Publicity regarding the launch of the consultation process was published on the Authority website, Portal, Facebook and Twitter pages
 - c) One online public forum for all districts of Merseyside was hosted via Teams (30 people took part). This followed the five initial public engagement forums that took place in October/November 2020 (previously reported to the Authority)
 - d) Distribution of the IRMP to over 100 strategic partners and other interested parties
 - e) Meetings with staff Representative Bodies – Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Fire Officers Association (FOA), UNISON and UNITE
 - f) Principal Officer talks with staff
 - g) Chair and Chief Fire Officer meetings with Merseyside MPs, the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Metro Mayor.
 - h) An on line questionnaire on our website for the public and staff (41 responses)

Public Forum

10. Opinion Research Services (ORS) an independent research company were commissioned to facilitate an all-district public forum to consider the proposals in the draft IRMP 2021-24. This was hosted online by ORS. These forums would normally be held on fire stations but due to Covid 19 restrictions these meetings were online via Zoom. ORS's role was to recruit and facilitate the meeting and report outcomes. ORS worked with MFRA to prepare supporting material for the meeting, providing the fullest possible information for participants.
 11. MFRA has had an extensive programme of engagement with residents for a number of years and, in this context, ORS has regularly facilitated district-based and all-Merseyside forums. Within this on-going framework, MFRA has conducted 'listening and engagement' and 'formal consultation' meetings.
 12. The all-district consultation forum followed on from the five district based public engagement forums carried out in October/November 2020 where the public were asked if
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they considered how the Authority planned for Risk, Demand and Vulnerability was fair and reasonable. The forums also revisited the Authority's Planning Principles which were endorsed by the public in 2016 and were used in planning the IRMP. The full ORS consultation forum report can be found at Appendix 2.

13. Consultation forums of this type are used because they enable the Authority to engage with a meaningful way with a cross section of representative members of Merseyside communities as demonstrated below:

LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA	GENDER	AGE	WORKING STATUS	LIMITING ILLNESS OR DISABILITY	ETHNIC GROUP
Knowsley: 6 Liverpool: 6 Sefton: 5 St Helens: 7 Wirral: 6	Male: 17 Female: 13	16-34: 4 35-44: 8 35:54: 8 55-64: 6 65+: 4	Working full-or part-time: 23 Not working/retired: 7	5	White British: 29 BAME: 1

14. The consultation forum was **overwhelmingly supportive** of MFRS's package of IRMP 2021-24 proposals, all were considered reasonable. They were particularly pleased with;
- The increase in fire engines via the strengthening of resource provision at Liverpool City and Kensington; the increased resilience and flexibility offered by the Hybrid duty system;
 - Introduction of the state of the art Stinger/Scorpion fire engine at St Helens;
 - The proposals to ensure specialist resources are 'in the right place';
 - The proposed Training and Development Academy and it's potential as a National Resilience Centre of Excellence;
 - Prevention activity in general and, in particular, the continued targeting of vulnerable people;
 - The introduction of a drone capability and a new risk information management system;
 - Continued collaboration between MFRS and its Blue Light Partners; and
 - MFRS taking the lead in National Resilience.

On-line Questionnaire

15. An on-line questionnaire was available on the MFRS website. The full results report including comments is attached at Appendix 3. The questionnaire asked respondents for their views on the proposals in the draft IRMP. The vast majority of respondents supported the proposals with some including comments and suggestions that will be considered further when the plans are implemented, should the supplement be approved by the Authority. The summary of results is as follows:

Respondents were asked to consider how reasonable our proposals were when taking into account the risks, demand and vulnerability in the area and the financial position of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority.

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- 88% of respondents (36 of 41 valid responses) considered our Response proposals very reasonable/reasonable.
 - 93% of respondents (38 of 41 valid responses) considered our Training and Development Academy proposals very reasonable/reasonable.
 - 95% of respondents (39 of 41 valid responses) considered our Prevention proposals very reasonable/reasonable
 - 93% of respondents (38 of 41 valid responses) considered our Protection proposals very reasonable/reasonable
 - 93% of respondents (38 of 41 valid responses) considered our Preparedness proposals very reasonable/reasonable
 - 95% of respondents (39 of 41 valid responses) considered our National Resilience proposals very reasonable/reasonable
 - 88% of respondents (36 of 41 valid responses) considered our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion proposals very reasonable/reasonable
 - 98% of respondents (40 of 41 valid responses) considered the draft IRMP and proposals very easy/easy to understand. When writing this IRMP we have endeavoured to write it in plain English.
16. There were some additional narrative comments included in the survey responses relating to the proposals. The Service does not consider that any of those comments materially alter the IRMP proposals, but changes will be made to the final published version to ensure any typographical errors are corrected.
17. One member of the public also commented on the Draft IRMP via email making suggestions on ways of promoting firefighter recruitment, particularly amongst women, promoting mental health issues and working with schools. Some of these activities already take place, but these suggestions are welcome and will be considered by the teams responsible for these areas.

Principal Officer Talks

18. The Principal Officers delivered an update on our IRMP proposals to all stations, Fire Control Marine Rescue Unit and Support Staff. Staff were encouraged to ask questions, make suggestions and complete the online survey. A number of email responses were received from staff and the MFRS response is summarised below.

Staff Representative Bodies

19. Consultation meetings took place with all representative bodies.
20. The FBU's response (Appendix 5) raised a number of points relating to the IRMP which have been considered and the responses outlined below. Several other comments and recommendations did not relate specifically to the IRMP, but instead, are more general
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matters that will be picked up through the Service's normal representative bodies consultation and engagement processes.

21. FOA's response (Appendix 4) was generally supportive of all proposals.
22. UNISON have not submitted a written response but were support of proposals during the consultation meeting.
23. UNITE were supportive of the proposals during the consultation and commented:
"The 2021/2024 draft IRMP is much easier to digest and still gets the salient points over without too much business speak, therefore becoming a more attractive proposition to actually peruse through to the end and see the whole plan in its entirety."

Consultation with Partners

24. The IRMP and the on-line survey were sent to Chief Fire Officers, MPs, Chief Constable of Merseyside Police, the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Metro Mayor, Liverpool City Region democratic services and North West Ambulance Service. As libraries and One Stop shops were not available due to Covid restrictions copies were sent to Corporate Communications teams at all five councils with a request to make the IRMP available to residents. Senior Officers also shared the IRMP with partners.
 25. It is not possible to establish exactly who has responded to the survey as a result of this part of the consultation (as the responses are anonymous), but two specific written responses were received.
 26. Great Manchester Fire and Rescue Service commented in their response (Appendix 6):
"Firstly, we would like to say we found the document itself is really clear, accessible, and easy to understand. It avoids jargon and clearly sets out your ambitions for the future."
 27. The North West Clinical Commissioning group responded with some questions in Appendix 9, which have resulted in one clarification relating to ambulance driving and should the IRMP be approved, further conversations will take place regarding future support for NWAS.
 28. There have been some changes made to the IRMP as a result of the consultation process, the majority of which are clarifications or updates, or they reflect that the supplement is no longer a draft document. Notably;
 29. During the Principal Officers' consultation with staff, the crews at Kensington and Liverpool City fire stations provided feedback on the proposals for those stations. This feedback is welcomed and will be reflected during the implementation.
 30. Other feedback from staff at Crosby fire station has also been considered and although the Chief Fire Officer, unfortunately whilst logical and supportive, the proposal to extend the use of the hybrid system from Crosby would require an additional £1million. As such it cannot be accommodated at this time.
 31. Additional comments made by staff from Crosby included a desire to be included in the Service's specialist response to Marine and coastal risk. The Chief Fire Officer is keen to
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explore this further and the Service's response to marine risk may extend to include crews from Crosby Fire & Rescue Station during the life of this plan.

32. The FBU made a number of suggestions during the consultation process. Having considered these, changes have been made the section summarising the National Framework IRMP requirements, the section detailing Risk (reference has now been made to other types of risk), the section dealing with Operational Plans (making clear that these are a continued development rather than new) and the proposals relating to specialist equipment and capabilities (clarifying that the proposal is relating to the location and operation of these specialisms rather than suggesting that they are new ones).
33. In addition, the FBU response made statements referring to a number of other areas pertinent to the IRMP which are responded to for thoroughness notably:
- *That the amount of reserves held by the Authority is high.*
The 2021/22 – 2025/26 MTFP approved by the Budget Authority at the meeting on the 25th February 2021, approved the Reserves Strategy for the Authority. The Strategy included the establishment of a Capital Investment Reserve that would contribute to the cost of a new TDA and cover other specific risks and investments. The Authority receives regular financial review reports that include an update on the risks to the MTFP, Capital Programme update and the Reserve Strategy. MFRA will utilise circa £25m worth of Reserves as detailed within the Medium Term Financial Plan to deliver this IRMP (e.g. to minimise borrowing to redevelop the TDA).
 - *That the IRMP does not reference the risk posed by pandemics.*
Members will be aware of the extensive business continuity arrangements and levels of support provided by the Service in relation to the current pandemic and plans have been amended during this period to reflect learning. The action related to Demand Management Planning also reflects this work and the Service's duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.
 - *That the variation in demand (emergency incidents) during the day and night time periods doesn't mean that fewer firefighters are required.*
Members will be aware that much of the content of recent IRMPs has reflected that the Service can be much more efficient and effective within available budgets if the emergency response provision reflects demand.
 - *That demand is high between 7pm and 10.30pm when resources reduce.*
We acknowledge that demand fluctuates and will review our current duty systems to reflect this comment.
 - *That the Authority does not pay the Living Wage.*
The Authority currently uses agreed national pay scales and a review of the implications of paying the Living Wage was presented to Members in 2016 (CFO/018/16). If Members wish, Officers can review that report and report back to Authority.
 - *That the Authority's response standard is not challenging.*
The current response standard, to attend Life Risk incidents within 10 minutes (from alert to in attendance) on 90% of occasions, was set during earlier IRMPs, following public engagement and the consideration of local risks and survivability. It enables the Service to respond quickly to Life Risk incidents and maintain its 10 Key Station methodology. It is a minimum standard with which the public can hold us to account, it is never the intention of the Service to take as long as 10 minutes to arrive at a fire once the crews are alerted - average attendance times for alert to in attendance is currently 5 minutes 44 seconds (accidental dwelling fires).
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- *That average response times are slower than they used to be.*
Members will be aware that average response times did become slower in the period leading up to the 2018 due to the budget cuts the Authority was required to make. On the recommendation of the CFO the Authority then made the bold decision in the IRMP Supplement 2019 to 2021 to use the budget differently and put resources back into the Service, quickening our average response times over the period (26 seconds faster to accidental dwelling fires). Based on the application of the Process Evolution software (which models response times based on resource allocation) the 2021-2024 IRMP will secure further improvements again (expected to be 2 seconds faster utilising predictive software).
 - *That the Authority should return to a policy of providing free smoke alarms for all.*
For several years, the Authority's home safety strategy has focused on vulnerability, analysing the data regarding fires and fatalities to focus the Service's prevention interventions where they are most needed. This has been a successful approach that was primarily directed at older people. This IRMP expands our approach to include people living in more deprived areas to ensure that the fire fighters and prevention teams operate where they can make the biggest positive impact.
 - *That the Authority is operating outside national procedures with its Hybrid duty system.*
The Hybrid duty system has been in operation since 2018, its introduction preventing the closure of Liverpool City and Wallasey fire stations of a night time, whilst increasing fire engine numbers. If the Authority was to return to an entirely wholetime (224) duty system for the whole Service, it is likely that the additional cost would result in the loss of at least eight fire engines, leading to fire stations closures.
 - *The FBU proposes the creation of a joint working party relating to equality, diversity and inclusion.*
The Diversity team welcome the opportunity to meet with the FBU to discuss ED&I matters. A meeting structure for such work is already established.
 - *The FBU suggests that the consultation on the IRMP has not been comprehensive.*
This report and its appendices set out in detail the extent of the consultation process which is broad and comprehensive.
34. FOA confirmed their support for the plan and have stated that they would like to support the Service's work with NWS to develop an Integrated Demand Management Plan. They are open to discussing how activities such as EMR and ambulance driving could continue, especially during periods when the ambulance service is experiencing extreme pressure.
35. Members are also asked to note that should the People Plan (also on this agenda) be approved, the Mission and Aims in the IRMP will be replaced with the new Vision, Purpose and Aims.

Equality and Diversity Implications

36. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed for the IRMP and is attached at Appendix 9 (updated to reflect the consultation). This has been reviewed following the consultation and contains references to the consultation outcomes but it has not been materially altered as a result of the consultation process.
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37. EIAs will also be completed for actions within the IRMP supplement prior to implementation where appropriate.
 38. The information provided in the EIA explains the ways in which different protected groups may be affected by the aims and objectives set out in the IRMP supplement, specifically the planned changes resulting from the reinvestment in services. It is believed that the proposals that are contained within the IRMP offer benefits to all groups within our communities.
 39. The range of duty systems detailed within the IRMP 2021-24 give staff increasing flexibility, the ability to self-roster and the potential to increase their earnings. Given the 24/7 role of the Fire & Rescue Service there will be times when staff who have caring responsibilities will be impacted by the hours of work. Opportunities to limit the impact will be considered as the changes are implemented so long as they don't have an adverse impact on the Service's ability to meet its statutory duties. The Authority has supportive flexible arrangements in place for any member of staff who wants the organisation to consider a request for a different pattern of working.
 40. The public forums, when considering the proposals presented to them, were reminded to consider the nine protected characteristics, plus socio-economic disadvantage which the Authority also includes. They believed the proposals were advantageous to all protected groups.

Staff Implications

41. In order to improve services to our communities the Authority is seeking to continue to re-invest in the front line and increase protection officer numbers.

Legal Implications

42. MFRA continues to discharge its statutory duties under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and by having regard to and complying with the National Framework for England 2018 by the actions detailed in this report and attached appendices.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

43. The financial implications were considered and approved during the development of the Authority's budget in February 2021. The outcome of the CSR 2021 and multi-year Government funding settlement and any implications on the IRMP will be considered during the 2022/23 budget process.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

44. This document details the strategic approach to risk management, encompassing what the Authority plans to do to manage risk, demand and vulnerability in the coming two years.

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

45. The IRMP is a key document by which Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority manage its resources with full consideration of the impact on risk to life for the people of Merseyside. This document details the actions we intend to take to achieve our Mission.
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BACKGROUND PAPERS

CFO/111/11

If this report follows on from another, list the previous report(s)

GLOSSARY OF TERMS
