



Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service

Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2021-24 Consultation

Report of findings from a Community Consultation Forum



Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2021-24 Consultation

Opinion Research Services

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Acknowledgements

Opinion Research Services (ORS) is pleased to have worked with Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS) on the community consultation forum reported here. The diverse participants engaged with the issues and discussed their ideas readily, so we trust that this report of findings will help to inform service planning.

We thank MFRS for commissioning the project as part of its on-going regular programme of public and stakeholder engagement and consultation about its risk management and budget planning.

We particularly thank the senior staff who attended the session to listen to the public's views and answer questions. The meeting benefited considerably from their readiness to answer participants' questions fully and frankly.

We are grateful to the 30 members of the public who took part in the meetings to share their views with us: they were patient in listening to important and detailed background information before entering positively into open discussions about challenging topics.

At all stages of the project, ORS's status as an independent organisation engaging with the public as fairly as possible was recognised and respected. We are grateful for the trust, and we hope this report will contribute usefully to thinking about future service delivery.

1. Key Findings

Key consultation findings

There was overwhelming support for MFRS’s IRMP-2021-2024 proposals

- 1.1 Participants were overwhelmingly supportive of MFRS’s ‘package’ of IRMP 2021-24 proposals: all were considered reasonable.

Response proposals (firefighters and fire engines)

- 1.2 Participants were particularly pleased to see: the introduction of the state-of-the-art Stinger/Scorpion fire engine at St Helens; the strengthening of resource provision at Kirkdale, Liverpool City and Kensington; and, more generally, the increased resilience and flexibility offered by the Hybrid duty system.

Response proposals (specialist appliances)

- 1.3 Participants were satisfied that MFRS is proposing to ensure its specialist resources are ‘in the right place’.

Response Proposals (training and development)

- 1.4 There was much support for the proposed Training and Development Academy and its potential use as a National Resilience Centre of Excellence which, it was felt, will raise the profile of MFRS and Merseyside.

Prevention proposals

- 1.5 There was a great deal of positivity around Prevention activity in general and, in particular, the continued targeting of vulnerable people – though one participant felt the *“target in deprived areas was a little low”*.
- 1.6 In terms of specific suggestions, participants suggested that MFRS could consider the following: using foodbanks to distribute smoke alarms to and educate those living in deprivation; and making better use of virtual communication tools to engage with a wider range of people.

Protection proposals

- 1.7 All proposals were supported, but the introduction of a drone capability and new Management Information System were particularly praised.

‘Operational Preparedness’ proposals

- 1.8 Participants were especially pleased that MFRS will continue working with and supporting its Blue Light partners: *“The collaborative approach is clearly effective and working with partners is very important”*.

National Resilience proposals

- 1.9 Participants were particularly supportive of the proposed National Resilience Centre of Excellence – they were *“proud”* to see MFRS taking the lead in what was considered essential UK-wide activity.

Equality, diversity and inclusion implications

- 1.10 Participants could see only positive impacts for people with protected characteristics¹ – especially in terms of more engagement between MFRS and residents in deprived areas, which are typically more diverse.

¹ Disability; sexual orientation; age; gender identity; sex; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion or belief; pregnancy and maternity.

2. The Consultation Process

Overview of the engagement

Background to the review

- 2.1 'Integrated Risk Management' is the development of a balanced approach by Fire and Rescue Services to reducing risk within the community. This is achieved by combining Prevention, Protection and Emergency Response, on a risk-assessed basis, in order to improve the safety of the community and create a safer working environment for firefighters.
- 2.2 In 2016, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority (MFRA) developed and consulted on its most recent Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2017-20, which was subsequently approved. Since then, a number of significant national and international incidents have occurred and these, combined with changes to the City Region infrastructure and the findings of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), gave the Chief Fire Officer and Authority cause to review the suitability of its plans to ensure that they were still fit for purpose. In light of this, an IRMP supplement was drafted to extend the Plan to 2021, aligning it to MFRA's medium-term financial plans. A number of alternative proposals were consulted on and approved in 2019.
- 2.3 The Service began to develop its IRMP for 2021-24 in 2020, and in October/November of that year held five community engagement forums with members of the public, one in each of Merseyside's five local authority areas, to discuss how it might provide fire and rescue services during this period. The views expressed in those forums, along with other relevant evidence, have helped shape the IRMP 2021-24 proposals discussed at the session reported here, which was attended by 30 of the participants from the engagement forums.

The commission

- 2.4 Opinion Research Services (ORS) - a spin-out company from Swansea University with a UK-wide reputation for social research - was appointed to convene, facilitate and report an online forum with members of the public from across Merseyside. Pre-consultation listening and engagement and formal consultation meetings have been undertaken with residents across Merseyside on a regular cycle; and in this context ORS has facilitated both district-based and all-Merseyside forums for the Service for many years.

Deliberative engagement

Consultation forum

- 2.5 The forum reported here used a 'deliberative' approach that encouraged members of the public to reflect in depth about MFRS's IRMP 2021-24 proposals while both receiving and questioning extensive background information.
- 2.6 The meeting (which was held on 21st April 2021 using the online video conferencing platform Zoom) lasted for 2.5 hours and 30 diverse participants took part. The dates of the meetings and attendance levels by members of the public are as shown in the table overleaf. As aforementioned, all participants – who were recruited by ORS – had attended one of the engagement forums held in October/November 2020.

- 2.7 In recruitment, care was taken to ensure that no potential participants were disqualified or disadvantaged by disabilities or any other factors. The recruitment process was monitored to ensure social diversity in terms of a wide range of criteria including, for example: geographical area; gender; age; working status; and disability/limiting long-term illness (LLTI). Overall, as demonstrated in the table below, participants represented a broad cross-section of residents – and as standard good practice, people were recompensed for their time and efforts in and taking part.

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

- 2.8 Although, like all other forms of qualitative engagement, deliberative forums cannot be certified as statistically representative samples of public opinion, the meeting reported here gave diverse members of the public the opportunity to participate actively. Because the meeting was inclusive, the outcomes are broadly indicative of how informed opinion would incline on the basis of similar discussions.

The agenda

- 2.9 The forum began with an ORS presentation to recap some contextual background information around MFRS's purpose and vision, and the importance of the Service factoring risk, demand and vulnerability into the way it uses its resources.
- 2.10 The slides used to outline this information can be seen below and overleaf.

Why the fire and rescue service exists – MFRS's Purpose



- The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
 - Respond
 - Prevent (home and community safety)
 - Protect (commercial and public building)
 - Educate and inform
- The Civil Contingencies Act 2004
 - Work with other agencies to deal with emergencies
- **The National Framework 2018**
 - Identify & Assess Risk
 - Prevent & Protect
 - Respond
 - Collaborate
 - Business Continuity (Intervention)
 - National Resilience
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)
 - They consider:
 - Efficiency
 - Effectiveness
 - People



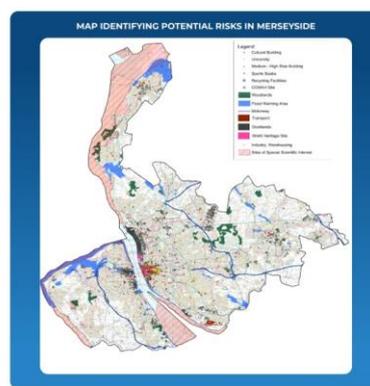
Risk, demand, vulnerability

Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying people, buildings and places where there is a likelihood of an emergency incident happening that would have a potentially serious effect on communities
Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using information about where, when and how often incidents have happened in the past to better understand what happened and plan to respond effectively/ efficiently to such demand in the future
Vulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using information from MFRS and other organisations to identify the types of people most likely to have a fire/other emergency and most likely to suffer harm



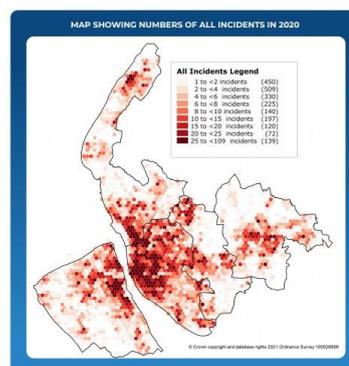
Risk...

- MFRS has identified 6 high impact incident types it should focus on:
 - Terrorist-related incidents
 - Marine incidents
 - Wildfire
 - Flooding
 - Fires in large buildings (e.g. high-rise [Grenfell])
 - Fires at recycling/waste processing plants
- Plotting these risks on a map → identify where risks are and place resources to meet them
 - (E.g. Combined Platform Ladder in the City Centre → most high-rise buildings)



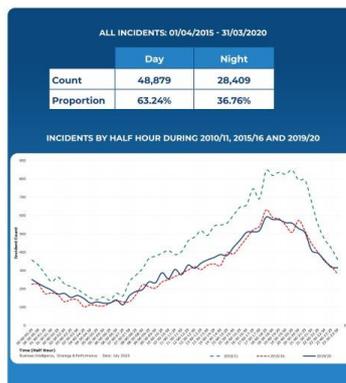
Demand is inextricably linked to deprivation

- Knowing where emergency incidents happen helps MFRS plan where it puts its...
 - Fire stations
 - Fire engines (+ other specialist equipment)
 - People
- Incidents aren't evenly spread across Merseyside



Demand... ...fluctuates

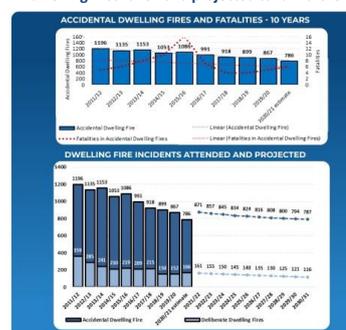
- Demand fluctuates between day and night
- Crews twice as busy and much more productive during the day than at night
- Knowing this, MFRS ensures its fire engines are in the right place at the right time



Vulnerability... ...prevention work is key

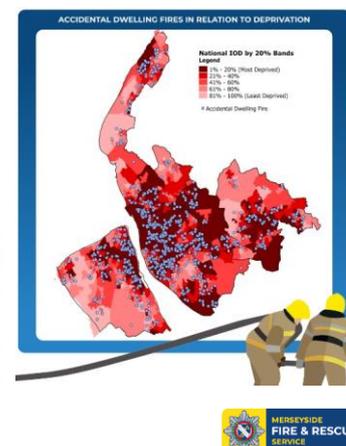
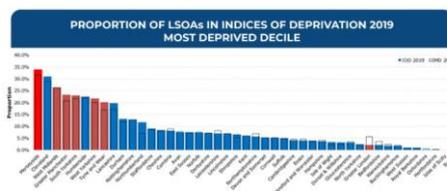
- Knowing where vulnerable people live → MFRS can plan how to deliver prevention services
- Service receives information about people aged 65+ from NHS...
- ...can target prevention services at most vulnerable group
- ...work with other partner agencies to help vulnerable clients

Prevention activities → deliberate/accidental dwelling fires fallen and projected to fall further



Vulnerability

- Vulnerability can be anywhere on Merseyside (so need resources available everywhere) 10 key stations
- ...but worse in areas of deprivation (Merseyside → some of highest levels in country)



2.11 The subsequent discussion then covered MFRS’s proposals for Response, Prevention, Protection, Operational Preparedness and National Resilience in turn (these are outlined in the following chapter). Participants were encouraged to ask questions throughout, and the meetings were thorough and truly deliberative in listening to and responding openly to a wide range of evidence and issues.

The report

- ^{2.12} This report reviews the sentiments and judgements of respondents and participants on MFRS's IRMP 2021-24 proposals. Verbatim quotations are used, in indented italics, not because we agree or disagree with them – it is for their vividness in capturing recurrent points of view. ORS does not endorse any opinions but seeks only to portray them accurately and clearly. The report is an interpretative summary of the issues raised by participants.

3. Focus Group Findings

Detailed consultation findings

Introduction

- 3.1 This chapter reports the views from a deliberative online forum with members of the public across Merseyside, which was independently facilitated by ORS. The session had two co-hosts: a main facilitator and a secondary host who was able to observe the session as well as address any technical issues arising from the online format.
- 3.2 The meeting followed a pre-determined topic guide which allowed space for a general discussion of the key questions under consideration. A series of information slides were shared at set points during the session, which ensured that participants had sufficient background information to actively deliberate on the proposals. The meetings were thorough and truly deliberative in listening to and responding openly to a wide range of evidence and issues.
- 3.3 In order to quantify views on some key questions, a series of ‘quick polls’ were undertaken during the groups. Responses to these were captured and are reported in this chapter, but it is important to note that this was a qualitative research exercise and the numerical findings from the polls are not statistically valid.
- 3.4 This is not a verbatim transcript of the session, but an interpretative summary of the issues raised by participants in a free-ranging discussion.

Main findings

Participants were overwhelmingly supportive of MFRS’s ‘package’ of IRMP 2021-24 proposals: all were considered reasonable. They were particularly pleased with:

The introduction of the state-of-the-art Stinger/Scorpion fire engine at St Helens; the strengthening of resource provision at Liverpool City and Kensington; and the increased resilience and flexibility offered by the Hybrid duty system;

The proposals to ensure specialist resources are ‘in the right place’;

The proposed Training and Development Academy and its potential use 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 Management Information System;

Continued collaboration between MFRS and its Blue Light partners; and

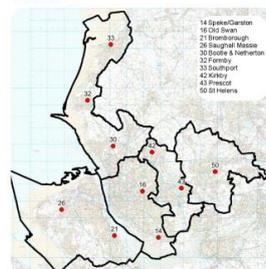
MFRS taking the lead in National Resilience.

Response proposals

- 3.5 Prior to discussion of MFRS’s IRMP 2021-24 Response proposals, participants were given some contextual information outlining the Service’s current resource distribution (as below).

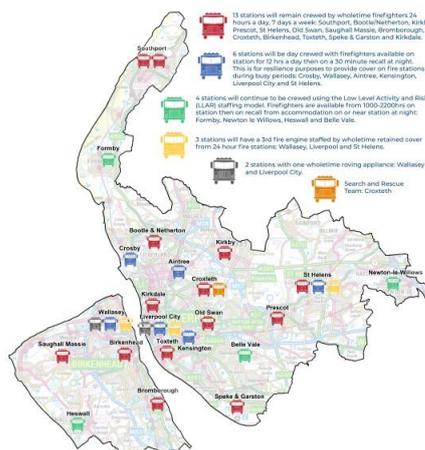
Response

- **23 fire stations (22 + Marine Rescue Unit)**
- **Strategically placed across Merseyside**
- **Staffed using a variety of shift patterns**
 - Whole-time
 - LLAR (Low Level Activity and Risk)
 - Day Crewing Whole Time Retained
 - Hybrid
- **Response Standard → all life risk incidents within 10 mins (of station alerted) 90% of time**
- **10 key fire stations**
 - With fire engine at each, majority of incidents reached within 10 minutes



Response

Current resources



Response proposals (firefighters and fire engines)

- 3.6 Participants were then firstly informed of MFRS’s following proposals around firefighters and fire engines, and were then offered the opportunity to ask any questions for clarification.

MFRS proposes to increase fire engines from 29 to 31 (plus Special Rescue Appliances) by ...

Introducing a Hybrid duty system at Kirkdale Fire Station

Combining Aintree and Croxteth Fire Stations into a new Hybrid/ Specialist Rescue 'superstation' at Long Lane, Aintree

Combining the duty systems at Liverpool City and Kensington Fire Stations to create a Dual Station Hybrid (including Command and Control function and improved aerial cover)

Introduce a Stinger/ Scorpion fire engine at St Helens (to replace the Combined Platform Ladder)

- 3.7 In order to establish the balance of opinion on these proposals, the group was asked the following question (via a Zoom poll): *“Which of the following statements do you agree with: MFRS’s response (firefighters and fire engines) proposals are completely reasonable; MFRS’s response (firefighters and fire engines) proposals are mostly reasonable; MFRS’s response (firefighters and fire engines) proposals are mostly unreasonable; MFRS’s response (firefighters and fire engines) proposals are completely unreasonable?”*
- 3.8 **29 of the 30 people who took part agreed that the proposals are completely reasonable, and the remaining participant considered them mostly reasonable.**
- 3.9 Participants were particularly pleased to see: the introduction of the state-of-the-art Stinger/Scorpion fire engine at St Helens (especially in light of increasing industrial and higher-rise development in the area); the strengthening of resource provision at Liverpool City and Kensington; and, more generally, the increased resilience and flexibility offered by the Hybrid duty system.

“Really happy with the investment in new technology such as the Scorpion ... ”

“Happy with the additional capabilities in St. Helens, particularly with the number of industrial warehouses currently going up around Haydock”

“I really agree with the investment in the new Scorpion fire engine. With the amount of high-rise development nowadays I think it gives security of reaching individuals if necessary”

“Strengthens Liverpool City and Kensington capabilities”

“The Hybrid stations increase resilience, capability”

Response proposals (specialist capabilities)

- 3.10 Participants were then informed of MFRS’s proposals for specialist capabilities as overleaf before being given the opportunity to ask any questions for clarification.



- 3.11 Because MFRS appreciates that introducing specialist teams at new locations will initially have an impact in terms of the time taken to train firefighters, participants were informed that the Service proposes to create a temporary capability (a 32nd fire engine) during 2021 to ensure there are no negative impacts on emergency response due to specialist training – and that the opportunity will also be taken to explore flexible duty systems and emergency response approaches.
- 3.12 They were then asked the following question (via a Zoom poll): *“Which of the following statements do you agree with: MFRS’s response (specialist capabilities) proposals are completely reasonable; MFRS’s response (specialist capabilities) proposals are mostly reasonable; MFRS’s response (specialist capabilities) proposals are mostly unreasonable; MFRS’s response (specialist capabilities) proposals are completely unreasonable?”*
- 3.13 **27 participants took part in the poll: they unanimously agreed that the proposals are completely reasonable.**
- 3.14 In discussion, participants commented positively that MFRS is proposing to ensure its specialist resources are ‘in the right place’. A typical comment was:

“Seems well thought out and resources are being deployed where required”

- 3.15 Some questions and mild concerns were asked and expressed around: firefighters’ and unions’ views on the proposed changes; and specialist appliance deployment and response times.

“Would the firefighters at Kirkdale be resistant to moving the specialist capabilities away from their location? I.e., is it de-skilling them at all?”

“How have the staff responded to the change in delivery of their skills etc. Has it been met with positive or negative impact, are the unions on board etc.?”

“Will specialist services be affected or compromised or confined by the location of the specialist appliance and the shift pattern at that area?”

“With moving the specialist units around can it run the risk of delaying response times?”

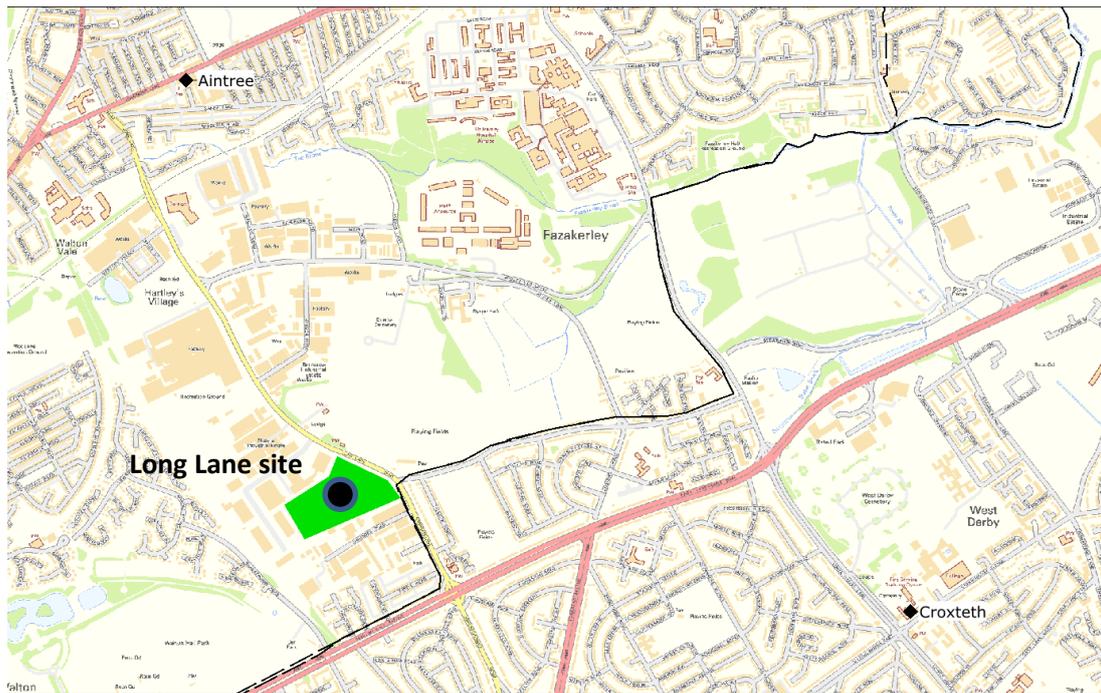
Response proposals (training and development)

- 3.16 Finally, in relation to Response, participants were informed of MFRS’s IRMP 2021-24 proposals for training and development and offered the opportunity for questions.

MFRS's current training and development academy is outdated, too small and in an area with very little room to expand, and its facilities do not reflect all foreseeable risks ...
MFRS proposes to ...

Build a £25m state of the art Training & Development Academy at Long Lane, Aintree

Look into securing Government funding to provide a “National Resilience Centre of Excellence”



- 3.17 They were then asked the following question (via a Zoom poll): “Which of the following statements do you agree with: MFRS’s response (training and development) proposals are completely reasonable; MFRS’s response (training and development) proposals are mostly reasonable; MFRS’s response (training and development) proposals are mostly unreasonable; MFRS’s response (training and development) proposals are completely unreasonable?”
- 3.18 **28 participants took part in the poll: they unanimously agreed that the proposals are completely reasonable.**
- 3.19 In discussion, there was a great deal of support for the proposed Academy and its potential use as a National Resilience Centre of Excellence which, it was felt, will raise the profile of MFRS and Merseyside itself.

“I welcome the update on training; this is a very positive approach ...”

“The training centre shows an investment in staff and the Service and the City”

“A new training centre in Liverpool will increase the profile of MFRS”

“The creation of the new training centre would be brilliant for the area”

- 3.20 There was some concern, though, that if Home Office funding is not forthcoming, the Centre of Excellence may not come to fruition – participants sought to understand what would happen to the existing site.

“What would happen if the funding was not provided, would this not take place?”

“What will happen to the old training academy? Will it be sold for additional revenue?”

Prevention proposals

3.21 Prior to discussion of MFRS's IRMP 2021-24 Prevention proposals, participants were given some contextual information outlining the Service's current approaches (as below).

Prevention

- **Two main approaches...**
- **Home Safety Strategy**
 - "Home Fire Safety Checks" → approx. 50k undertaken each year
 - Address fire safety concerns in the home
 - "Safe and Well Visits" → 10k a year carried out by Prevention Advocates
 - Also focus on key aspects of health
 - Connect people with partner agencies if needed
- **Community Safety Strategies**
 - Help MFRS reduce arson/other deliberate fires, improve road/water safety and work with young people
 - MFRS connected to what local councils, other partner organisations and other FRSS are planning



3.22 They were then informed of MFRS's proposals for this area of activity, before being asked the following question (via a Zoom poll): "Which of the following statements to you agree with: MFRS's Prevention proposals are completely reasonable; MFRS's Prevention proposals are mostly reasonable; MFRS's Prevention proposals are mostly unreasonable; MFRS's Prevention proposals are completely unreasonable?"



3.23 Of the 29 people who took part in the poll, 27 considered the proposals to be completely reasonable, and the remaining two considered them mostly reasonable.

- 3.24 In discussion, there was a great deal of positivity around Prevention activity in general and, in particular, the continued targeting of vulnerable people.

“I feel that the engagement is clearly effective ... every pound spent must save a fortune and the smoke alarms pay for themselves over and over, and help also prevent risk to firefighters”

“A positive approach, raising the profile of MFRS. It is comforting to know that smoke alarms are available to the vulnerable. The elderly would welcome home fire checks; they will feel protected”

- 3.25 It should also be noted that a few participants had recently received a Home Fire Safety Check and praised the Service offered, for example:

“We had two alarms fitted recently and the guys checked over sockets, lamps and many other safety aspects of prevention. An amazing service...”

- 3.26 In terms of specific suggestions, participants suggested that MFRS could consider the following: using foodbanks to distribute smoke alarms to and educate those living in deprivation; and making better use of virtual communication tools (that have been used so extensively by people of all ages during the COVID-19 pandemic) to engage with a wider range of people.

“Can you work with the food bank to distribute smoke alarms and educate?”

“The way people have communicated during the pandemic would suggest perhaps alternative ways to engage, educate. I thought that unlike with the use of technology etc. explored in the previous section regarding Response, this section seemed a bit more traditional and a bit less innovative”

“We have moved a lot of services via technology in NHS and it has been embraced by older people ... ”

- 3.27 Moreover, one participant felt the *“target in deprived areas was a little low”* – another was of the view that the target age for Prevention activity should be raised to 70 given people are now generally living healthier and longer lives.

“Speaking as a fit and healthy 65-year-old, should the target age perhaps be 70 now that we are generally healthier and living longer?”

Protection proposals

3.28 Prior to discussion of MFRS's IRMP 2021-24 Protection proposals, participants were given some contextual information outlining the Service's current activity (as below).

Protection

- **MFRS → legal duty to enforce "Fire Safety Order" and promote fire safety in i.e. offices, factories, shops, public + high-rise buildings**
 - 74,246 premises in Merseyside that need to comply with Order
- **Also...**
 - ... supports businesses/communities to meet legal fire safety duties
 - ...is responsible for enforcing other laws related to fire safety (e.g. safe storage of explosives and petroleum-spirit)
 - ...Building Regulations Team (including fire engineer) works with local councils to ensure buildings/people are safe
- **Following Grenfell → MFRA has committed to...**
 - ... inspect all high-rise residential buildings during first 12 months of Plan
 - ... work with building owners to make unsuitable cladding safe



3.29 They were then informed of MFRS's proposals in this area and offered the opportunity to ask any questions for clarification, before answering the following question (via a Zoom poll): *"Which of the following statements do you agree with: MFRS's Protection proposals are completely reasonable; MFRS's Protection proposals are mostly reasonable; MFRS's Protection proposals are mostly unreasonable; MFRS's Protection proposals are completely unreasonable?"*



3.30 **28 of 29 participants considered the proposals to be completely reasonable, and the remaining one considered them mostly reasonable.**

- 3.31 In discussion, the introduction of a drone capability and new Management Information System was praised – as was the proposed full response to the Grenfell Tower Fire Enquiry.

“The drones are very much a future asset”

“Really happy with the investment in new technology such as the ... drone”

“Making the most benefit of advances in technology and drones is an excellent idea”

“The planned changes to the management information systems must be a priority to assist the Service in their delivery”

“Happy to see lessons being learned and implemented after Grenfell”

‘Operational Preparedness’ proposals

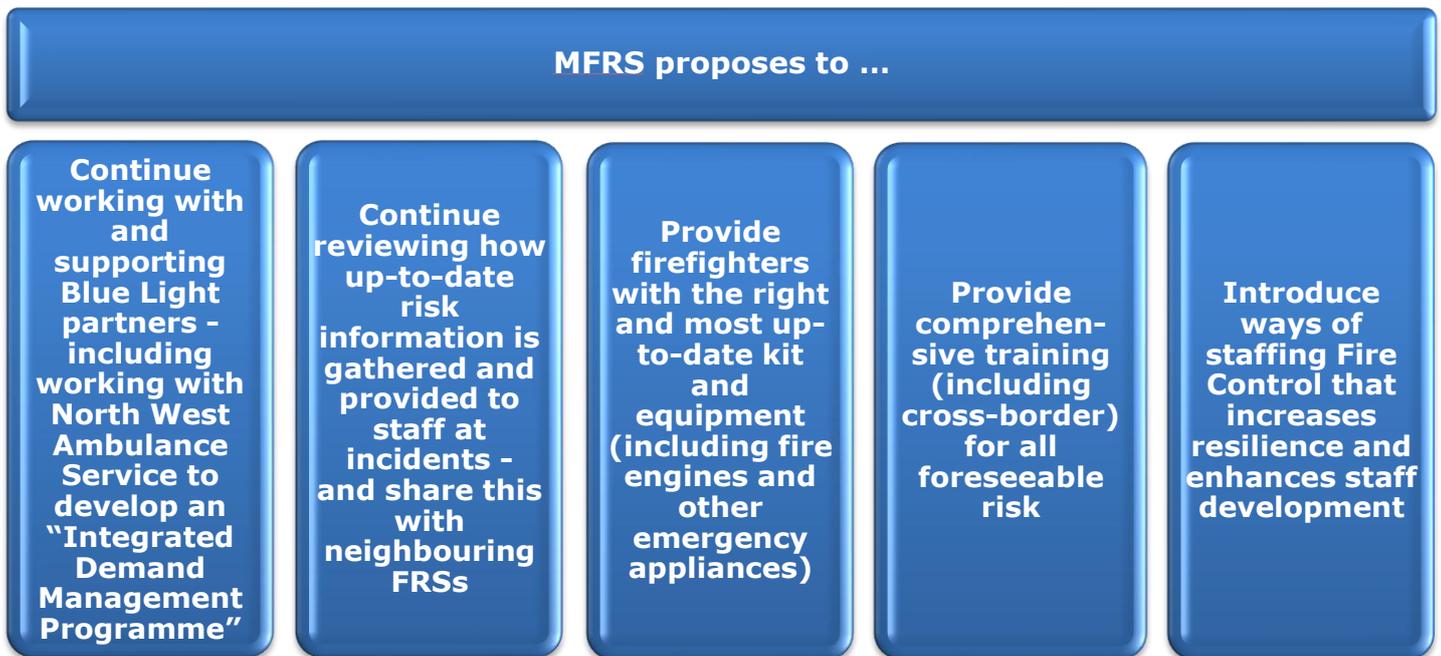
- 3.32 Prior to discussion of MFRS’s IRMP 2021-24 ‘Operational Preparedness’ proposals, participants were given some contextual information outlining the department’s work (as below).

‘Operational Preparedness’

- **‘Operational Preparedness’ department:**
 - Considers all foreseeable FRS risks (local, national or international)
 - Works alongside partners (local councils, NHS, Police and Ambulance Service) to prevent/reduce the impact of risks that affect Merseyside
 - Ensures collaboration with other emergency services through “Blue Light Collaboration Team”
 - Organises business continuity arrangements (i.e. how services delivered when something unexpected happens i.e. COVID-19 Pandemic)
 - Provides firefighters/officers with training and information
 - Plans for major events such as the Grand National
 - Looks after ‘National Resilience’ assets, Search and Rescue Team, Marine Rescue Unit and MFRS Control



- 3.33 They were then informed of MFRS’s proposals for this area of activity and offered the opportunity to ask clarification questions, before being asked the following question (via a Zoom poll): “Which of the following statements do you agree with: MFRS’s ‘Operational Preparedness’ proposals are completely reasonable; MFRS’s ‘Operational Preparedness’ proposals are mostly reasonable; MFRS’s ‘Operational Preparedness’ proposals are mostly unreasonable; MFRS’s ‘Operational Preparedness’ proposals are completely unreasonable?”



3.34 **27 of 28 participants considered the proposals to be completely reasonable, and the other considered them mostly reasonable.**

3.35 The general consensus in discussion was that:

"The collaborative approach is clearly effective and working with partners is very important"

National Resilience proposals

3.36 Prior to discussion of MFRS's IRMP 2021-24 'National Resilience' proposals, participants were given some contextual information outlining the Service's current activity in this area (as below).

National Resilience

- **National Resilience = arrangements that reduce impact of national risks inc. large building collapses, major transport incidents, terrorist attacks, major floods/wildfires**
- **MFRA → lead authority for National Resilience (funding provided by Home Office)**
 - **Manages specialist people, vehicles and equipment based around country**
 - **Also has responsibility for ...**
 - **National Resilience Fire Control → provides resources to wherever they are needed**
 - **National Resilience training → national courses on working with vehicles/equipment**
 - **Vehicle and equipment maintenance**



3.37 They were then informed of MFRS’s proposals for National Resilience, offered the opportunity to ask questions, and then asked (via a Zoom poll): *“Which of the following statements do you agree with: MFRS’s National Resilience proposals are completely reasonable; MFRS’s National Resilience proposals are mostly reasonable; MFRS’s National Resilience proposals are mostly unreasonable; MFRS’s National Resilience proposals are completely unreasonable?”*



3.38 **28 participants took part in the poll: they unanimously agreed that the proposals are completely reasonable.**

3.39 As reported above, participants were particularly supportive of the proposed National Resilience Centre of Excellence. Moreover, pride was expressed that MFRS is taking the lead in what was considered essential UK-wide activity – especially in the context of the current Manchester Arena Inquiry and forthcoming report and recommendations.

“Having been involved with the New Dimension procurement to create National Resilience, it is heartening to see that MFRA is providing the requisite lead in maintaining and developing this area of responsibility”

“We need to have the capacity to respond to recommendations following the Manchester Arena response review”

Equality, diversity and inclusion implications

3.40 Participants were informed that, in developing its proposals, MFRS must consider whether they will have a particular impact (either positive or negative) on people with protected characteristics².

3.41 No negative impacts were raised and, in fact, participants could only see positives – especially in terms of more and better engagement between MFRS and residents in deprived areas, which are typically more diverse.

² Disability; sexual orientation; age; gender identity; sex; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion or belief; pregnancy and maternity.

“I believe that the data supports the more deprived areas are the areas where there is greater diversity and so by engaging and increasing Prevention in this area, I think it would have a positive benefit...”

Overall comments

- 3.42 Overall, as evidenced by the following comments, participants were overwhelmingly in favour of MFRS’s ‘package’ of IRMP 2021-24 proposals.

“From all the years I’ve been part of these sessions this seems to be the most positive ever ... ”

“It creates a balanced and proactive way of both maintaining the high levels of service and response and improving the Service's functionality and position as a leading fire service”

“One of the recurring themes throughout our previous discussions has been to exploit flexibility. This strategy certainly delivers this. Excellent work!”

“It seems to me that the Fire Service has listened to the feedback from these sessions, taken account of the views of their staff and the change in types of risk over time and produced the best possible set of proposals for the future”

- 3.43 They were particularly supportive of an increased use of technology and innovative practice, and of MFRS’s ‘forward-thinking’ vision for what has, in the past, been considered a somewhat traditional service.

“It is good to see the Authority embracing new technology and being able to grow...”

“Nice to see how a Service can keep improving and keep up to date with modern technology without compromise elsewhere”

“Clearly MFRS have looked at their budget and proposed implementation of increased technology and training. They have vision for a Service that was looked upon as same old same”

“I'm proud of the innovative work being done by the local Service and as a trend setter nationally. Keep up the good work!”