

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

8TH APRIL 2021

MINUTES

Present: Cllr Brian Kenny (Chair) Councillors Doreen knight, Emily Spurrell, Paul Tweed, Jan Grace, Linda Maloney, Lynne Thompson, Edna Finneran and Allan Brame

Also Present: N/A

Apologies of absence were received from:

1. Preliminary Matters

Members considered the identification of declarations of interest, any urgent additional items, and any business that may require the exclusion of the press and public.

Members Resolved that:

- a) There were no declarations of interest made by individual Members, in relation to any items of business on the Agenda.
- b) There were no additional items of business which the Chair determined should be considered as matters of urgency.
- c) There were no items of business requiring the exclusion of the press and public during consideration thereof, due to the possible disclosure of exempt information.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the previous meeting, held on 2nd February 2021, were approved as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

3. Remote Authority Meetings

Members considered Report CFO/015/21 of the Acting Monitoring Officer, concerning the future of remote Authority meetings and request that the amendments made to standing orders and procedural rules for remote meetings are withdrawn on the condition the regulations do expire on 7th May 2021.

Members were given a brief overview of the report and were informed that the next full Authority meeting will be after the time the regulations are due to expire on 20th May 2021.

Members were advised that the Democratic Services Team are reviewing the maximum capacity for Members to attend meetings at Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS) Headquarters in the Conference Suites. At the smaller

committee meetings, there will be enough room for all Members and the press/public to attend, but at the full Authority meetings this will be more difficult and there will be a limited number of spaces for press/public to be present. Due to this only at full Authority meetings the press/public gallery will be on a first come first serve basis, whereby the amount of seats available will be advised on the Agenda pack prior to the meeting.

Members were happy with the way MFRS have conducted themselves and have been Covid safe on their premises and welcomed the next stage of the process.

Members queried if it would be possible to support the recent challenge in the High Court in relation to remote meetings for local authorities as there would be a preference to keep a hybrid system in place for future meetings as remote meetings had benefits and for some are a preferred method of attendance, as it gives Members lots of flexibility. Members were advised that lots of organisations were keen to support the hybrid system for future meetings and that the legal matter had been put to the High Court. Members were informed that we await the outcome of this case.

Members resolved that:

- a) The legislation to hold Authority meetings remotely has not been extended, be noted;
- b) The Acting Monitoring Officer be instructed to review the options available to the Authority for face to face meetings to recommence that will be compliant with Government guidance;
- c) The removal of the amendments to the standing orders and procedural rules contained within Appendix B from the constitution subject to the Remote Meetings Regulations expiring on 7th May 2021, be approved; and
- d) The changes to the constitution as detailed in paragraph 8, be approved.

4. HMICFRS inspection self-assessment

Members considered Report CFO/017/21 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) will start on 10th May and that a self-assessment (Appendix A) and document request have been submitted as part of the inspection process.

Members were given an overview of the report and were reminded that we have had previous inspections. The details of key changes since the first round of inspections was highlighted to Members.

Members were advised that Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (MFRA) had no areas of improvement identified in a way that others have done since the last inspection, although MFRA have continued to improve as a Service.

Members were advised that this inspection will run over a 6 week period and that it will be virtual due to Covid19.

Members resolved that:

The information contained in this report about MFRS's forthcoming HMICFRS inspection, be noted.

5. MFRA Volunteer Workforce Support to the Merseyside Vaccination Programme

Members considered report CFO/014/21 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning, the support provided by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (MFRA) volunteer workforce to health colleagues to support the delivery of the Covid19 vaccination programme.

Members were given a presentation updating the Authority on the utilisation of volunteers, to support the response to the pandemic.

Group Manager Mark Thomas introduced the following presentation – Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service Supporting the Vaccination Programme.

Members were updated with the following timeline:

- Covid19 arrived on the planet in December 2019
- On 31st January 2020, coaches from London carrying passengers from Wuhan were quarantined in Wirral (the start of the journey regarding Covid19 and the start of a huge multi agency response locally)
- March 2019 (6 weeks later) lockdown began and before Boris had even given this lockdown speech, clinical trials to find a vaccine against the Sars Covid 2 virus had begun across the globe
- April 23rd 2020 (4 weeks later) Dr Elisa Granato a Microbiologist was one of the first two people to trial the Oxford vaccine on 23rd April 2020
- MFRS officers co-opted onto various working cells as part of the multi agency response under the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), this split mid year to include vaccination cell which initially was focussing on hope that the flu vaccine would be delivered against a backdrop of Covid
- Then in October 2020 the cell was given information that the plan would not be used for Flu but for Covid vaccines which were in the advanced stages. Information was released that Covid vaccines would be ready (at scale) for deployment from 2nd December 2020 and plans were drawn up to deploy. It is hard to believe the pace.
- Structures were agreed through the LRF on a place based delivery model for Cheshire and Merseyside ~ 9 places
- 8th December 2020 Grandmother Margaret Keenan was the first person in the world to be given the Pfizer Covid19 vaccine as part of a mass vaccination programme

Since March 2020 MFRA staff had already undertaken various different tasks in support of the multi-agency response to the pandemic and with our well

established existing relationships with our health colleagues, it was asked what we could do to help.

MFRS asked the Nation Health Service (NHS) could they help and were told 'yes' they would appreciate the assistance. In December 2020 conversations were had with St Helens and Knowsley's NHS Teaching Hospitals Trust who were the designated workforce leaders for the vaccination programme. They wanted vaccinators and admin staff, so to begin with 60 volunteers from MFRS were provided.

All MFRS staff were asked if they would like to help and again staff volunteered their services in the hundreds. All staff (from every department of the service) stepped forward of their own accord as they all wanted to be a part of the solution to end the pandemic. Around 200 staff are part of the vaccination team.

Members were advised that there were challenges along the way. Protocols in law changed in January 2021 to allow non-medical staff to administer vaccines. Legal teams from MFRA, St Helens NHS and Knowsley NHS teamed up to work out liability and indemnity issues. Clearly there was a risk to MFRS staff administering injections without correct training, so a proper training regime was set up with NHS educators who had been reengaged to help the programme. Clinical negligence liability would fall under the NHS trust and the Authority would be indemnified, so there would be no risk to the Authority.

Training was given to staff by St John Ambulance initially, then NHS educators who had been redeployed from other frontline NHS duties and reengaged from retirement. There was online training plus face to face training meaning 136 vaccinators were now able to draw up, handle and administer the Oxford Astra Zeneca vaccine and the Moderna vaccine.

Before staff were deployed they were provided with welfare support which consisted of a 20 page induction pack, 15 page guidance document, risk assessment document and most importantly telephone numbers of managers - to communicate with staff and help them feel secure.

Vaccinations then started at the mass vaccination site in St Helens at the Rugby League Ground. The site is currently split into two levels – GP surgery on ground floor delivering inoculations and on first floor the Astra Zeneca vaccine. The 2nd floor will imminently start delivering Moderna vaccines.

Members were then informed of what MFRA staff in the programme had to say, which were all very positive and reassuring. Figures are received daily from the site and feedback from MFRS staff is too.

MFRS staff have made the following comments:

- A lady asked to have her photo taken whilst having her vaccine as she wanted to show her granddaughter and tell her this would go down in the history books.

- The setup is very slick and professional; those individuals I have worked with have been amazing. Listening to some of the comments from the members of the public is heart-warming and makes our efforts so much more special.
- A man I vaccinated said it was his first time out the house in 12 months and I was making it possible for him to meet his granddaughter for the first time. He has only ever met her over face time and he cannot wait to hold her in his arms.
- A lady very emotional how we were all there to do this and couldn't believe the fire service were involved.
- It ran like clockwork and I have met some fantastic people, it has been an honour to help out.
- I am so proud to say I am part of this amazing team.

Since 8th February 2021, around 5000 hours have been worked by MFRS staff, 18400 vaccinations have been administered by staff and 136 vaccinators & 55 support staff have assisted in this.

Members were then advised what will be happening next. MFRS will continue to work at the Mass Vaccination Site and will be supporting the second doses of the vaccine which started today. The Moderna vaccine will be arriving to the Mass Vaccination Site any day now and staff will be shown how to administer this. Staff are still volunteering their assistance daily. There are still more staff stepping forward daily to be trained as vaccinators and lots of things for staff to do to assist. MFRS will continue to support the communications task as 'vaccine hesitancy' is addressed and will contribute to ending the pandemic and help our communities to stay safe and alive.

Members were then shown a table of the cumulative percentage of total Covid deaths and the amount of vaccinations that are given to prevent deaths. It was explained that for every 1000 doses of vaccination that are given, 1 life can be saved. After MFRA have gave over 18000 vaccinations out, this figure shows how many lives have been contributed to being saved.

Members commended MFRS for their proactive response throughout the pandemic and were told that the local communities have been served so well in exceptional ways. The involvement in the vaccination programme is truly outstanding and Members are grateful as it is an amazing legacy for everyone involved.

Group Manager Thomas was thanked for an amazing presentation and was informed that the information that has been offered to Members today will be fed back to the Local Authorities.

Members were then asked to consider the figures of 65000 vaccinations delivered so far by the site in total to nearly 19000 vaccinations given by MFRA staff, which shows that 1 in 3 vaccinations have been given by a firefighter or member of MFRA staff. Teams have worked tirelessly with partners and have shared the learning beyond Merseyside – into Cheshire. People are safe and well thanks to MFRA's contribution, which is incredible to know and MFRA will continue to support this challenging environment.

Chief Fire Officer Phil Garrigan wanted to also record his thanks to the 200 staff that have assisted in this programme.

Members resolved that:

- a) the content of this report and the contribution of MFRA staff towards delivery of the vaccination programme with specific reference to deployment at the Merseyside Mass Vaccination Site, be noted; and
- b) Members formally agreed to add that they wish to record their sincere pride and gratitude to all relevant MFRS staff.

6. Current TDA Site Refresh - Increase to Capital Budget

Members considered report CFO/016/21 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning, an increase in the capital budget to support additional temporary classrooms and a general refresh of the facilities at the Training & Development Academy (TDA).

Members were given a brief introduction of the report, highlighting that there is a proposal in the 2021-24 draft IRMP to build a new TDA at Long Lane in 2023. Originally the current TDA site was planned for a full refresh costing around £5-6 million, but as a new TDA now may be agreed to be built, it is not worth spending that amount. Repairs etc still need to be completed on the current TDA site to meet the standard for training provisions which is why the request for £150,000 has been brought to the Authority.

The reasons for the additional needs to the site were brought to Members attention and they were advised that this is an interim arrangement.

Members asked for clarity regarding the Covid budget reserve that these costs are being used from to ensure there are sufficient funds to cover the costs and were informed that £300,000 was allocated to us from the Government at the end of last year. £200,000 is being carried forward into 2021-22 and MFRA premises are now Covid secure, meaning no more PPE is required, so Finance are confident the costs can be used from this budget.

Members resolved that:

- a) the TDA requiring investment in order to maintain the expected standards for training delivery in the forthcoming three years' subject to the proposed move to the new site on Long Lane (subject to approval), be noted; and
- b) the allocation of £150,000 to support the capital work required for the essential maintenance of the current TDA and National Resilience facilities, be approved.

Close

Date of next meeting: 1st February 2022

Signed: _____

Dated: _____