

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE		
DATE:	16 TH DECEMBER 2021	REPORT NO:	CFO/071/21
PRESENTING OFFICER	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	AM GARY OAKFORD	REPORT AUTHOR:	AM PAUL KAY
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	JEN TAYLOR- COMMUNITY SAFETY COORDINATOR JOHN FIELDING – BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE MANAGER JOE CUNLIFFE – STATION MANAGER PROTECTION OFFICERS		
TITLE OF REPORT:	BONFIRE REPORT 2021		

APPENDICES:	APPENDIX A – BONFIRE PERFORMANCE 2021
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Purpose of Report

1. To inform Members of the outcomes of the Bonfire period 2021.

Recommendation

2. That Members note the content of the report and the impact that MF&RS staff have had on the delivery of the Bonfire Plan 2021.

Introduction and Background

3. This year, MFRS achieved high-level reductions in ASB fires across Merseyside; all Local Authority Areas other than St Helens achieved significant reductions.

District	2020	2021	Difference	Percentage Difference
Knowsley	33	23	-10	-30.3%
Liverpool	126	115	-11	-8.7%
Liverpool North	77	70	-7	-9%
Liverpool South	49	43	-6	-12.2%
Sefton	32	11	-21	-65.6%%
St Helens	31	33	2	6.4%
Wirral	46	36	-10	-21.7%
Merseyside Total	268	218	-50	-18.8%

4. MFRS receive a significant increase in calls for the service over the Halloween and Bonfire period. In order to limit those demands our annual Bonfire Plan was enacted to help mitigate the number of 999 calls and the overall number of Anti-Social Behaviour ('ASB') fires MFRS attend.

5. Prevention Directorate planning for Bonfire 2021 commenced in June. 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 included monthly Silver meetings chaired by Merseyside Police at the JCC. The monthly meetings involved all Police Commanders responsible for implementation of Operation Banger and representatives from MF&RS and other agencies.
6. This year MFRA issued 87 licences from retailers to store and sell fireworks. Officers inspected premises to ensure suitable and sufficient action had been actioned 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 and Trading Standards.
7. MFRS Corporate Communications Team produced a bespoke Bonfire Communications Strategy which included:
 - A series of infographics carrying unique messages.
 - A new Bonfire Leaflet.
 - 2 new video animations were created in relation to the dangers of arson and the impact of ASB in local communities.
 - Co-branded communications with the LFC Foundation.
 - Use of dedicated email for reporting.
8. The campaign also included press releases promoting the key messages at key times during the reporting period and MFRS paid for a social media campaign which enabled Corporate Communications to 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 25th October until Thursday 4th November, MFRS had the use of 5 tipper trucks across Merseyside. The Prevention Directorate and volunteers from across the service including apprentices, operational firefighters, Fire Control and a number of green book staff staffed these in order to remove the build-up of bonfire material. Our staff removed over 54 tonnes of material.

IMPACT OF COVID 19

10. Last year, incidents were up due to the implementation of a national lockdown and the cancellation of organised firework displays and other diversionary activity. This year's targeted approach and high visibility has resulted in the lowest figures recorded since 2013 when calls were stacked.
11. The COVID19 pandemic has still had a significant impact on organised firework displays a number of which did not go ahead, for example Liverpool's River of Light and St Helens Spark in the Park, these would normally attract a combined attendance in excess of 120,000 people.

12. A range of other diversionary activities that would under normal circumstances support the reduction of Anti-Social Behaviour during the bonfire period were also significantly disrupted, however, MFRS worked with LFC foundation and provided football sessions at key locations across Merseyside during the Bonfire period.
13. In 2021, MFRS staff were able to return to schools, identifying the most vulnerable by utilising the Violence Reduction Unit evidence HUB. MFRS staff along with partners delivered key messages and delivered a specially commissioned animation highlighting the impact of arson and ASB in local communities. MFRS visited 53 schools and delivered our message to over 5000 children and young people.
14. This year, MFRA returned to 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.

PERFORMANCE

15. Despite the city region stepping out from the mechanisms of lockdown and populating public spaces, MFRS was able to deliver its lowest figures to date.

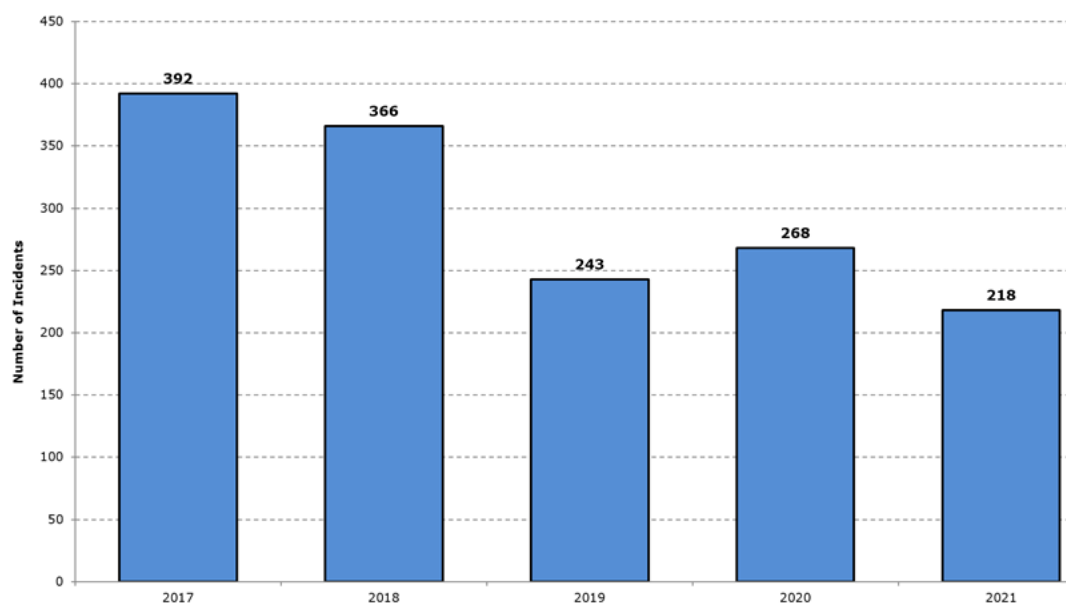


Table 1

16. Table 1 identifies that during the 2021 bonfire period the number of deliberate secondary fire incidents attended by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service was 218. This is a decrease of 50 incidents (18.6 %) from 2020. When compared historically to the 2017 period there has still been an overall reduction of 174 incidents. Over the 5-year period, 2021 saw the lowest total overall.

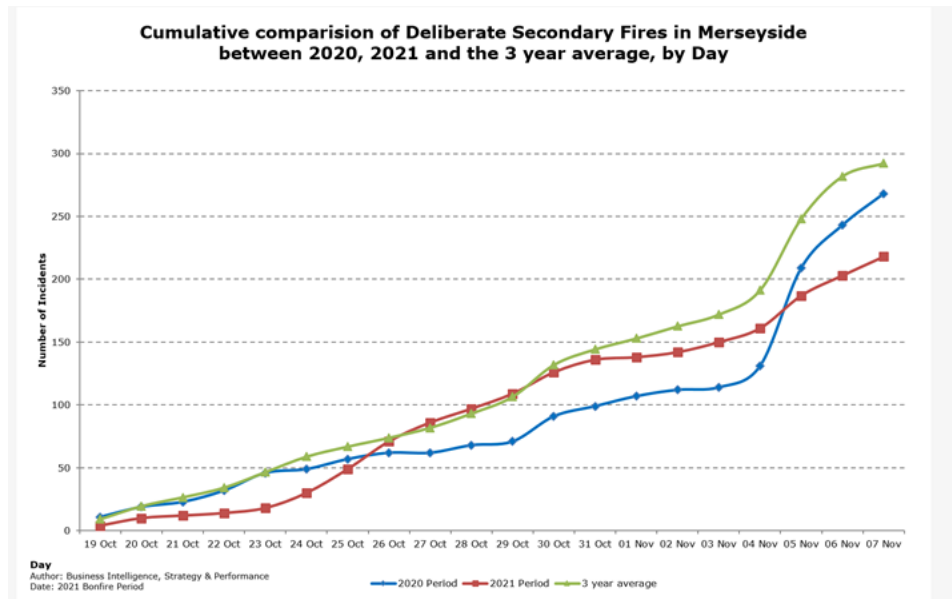


Table 2

17. Table 2 provides a cumulative analysis of deliberate secondary fire incidents through the 2021 period, contrasting it with 2020, as well as the 3 year average. The chart shows that though there was a decrease between the 2021 and 2020 bonfire periods, when compared to historical averages, performance was positive.

18. MFRS adopted a creative approach during this year's Bonfire period and ensured high visibility throughout the recording period. Tactics utilised included:

- HFSC Reassurance campaigns.
- PATS/Fly tipping referrals.
- Community Risk Management (CRM) routes.

HFSC Reassurance Campaign

19. MFRS utilised historical incident data relating to ASB and implemented 8 multi-pump HFSC reassurance campaigns in the most vulnerable areas over a 4 week period. 10 fire engines targeted high demand wards in each district, twice a week for 4 weeks leading up to and during the bonfire period. This targeted approach provided local communities reassurance, whilst also enabling MFRS to generate fly tipping referrals and PATS forms. The targeted campaign generated 1484 home fire safety checks.

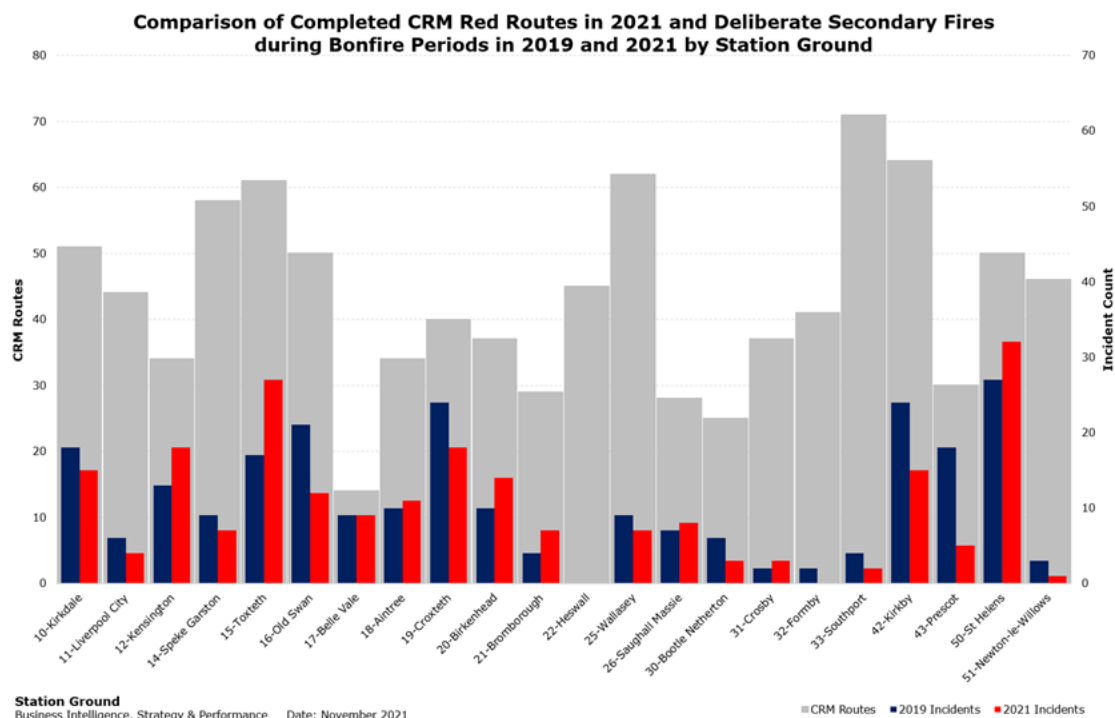
PATS/Fly tipping reports

20. The Potential Arson Target Scheme is a key tool for identifying and reducing the threat of potential Arson through partnership working. MFRS gathers information from local authorities on planning and application refusals, licensed premises closures, license revocations and rating reductions due to vacant premises.

21. When a vulnerable empty property is identified a PAT form should be completed which will be dealt with by the Arson Team, working alongside partners. During the Bonfire period 21 PATS forms were completed.
22. MFRS worked in partnership with local authorities and hired 5 tipper trucks to remove waste and fly tipping from each district. An e-mail account was created to encourage members of the public to notify the service of location and along with community fire stations, 189 fly tipping referrals were submitted. This resulted in over 54 tonnes of hazardous rubbish and fly tipping being removed from the streets which otherwise may have been used to fuel deliberately set fires.

Community Risk Management (CRM) routes

23. In 2021, MFRS adopted Community risk management routes across Merseyside. CRM routes follow the premise of Micro beat analysis utilised by Merseyside police. Micro beat analysis measures the impact of a police officer being located in a specific ASB spot for a short period. The theory proposes that the high visibility albeit for a short burst provides a prolonged period without ASB.
24. MFRS identified ASB spots across Merseyside utilising historical data and provided all Community fire stations with routes to be completed in fire engines.
25. During the Bonfire period MFRS fire engines completed 951 routes providing high visibility to local communities.



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

District	2020	2021	Difference	Percentage Difference
Knowsley	3	1	-2	-66%
Liverpool	11	9	-2	-18.1%
<i>Liverpool North</i>	7	6	-1	-14.2%
<i>Liverpool South</i>	4	3	-1	-25%
Sefton	1	1	0	0%
St Helens	0	2	2	100%
Wirral	2	3	1	50%
Merseyside Total	17	16	-1	-5.8%

Equality and Diversity Implications

27. MFRS adopted a dual approach towards social media, utilising an organic and 'paid for' campaign that target specific postcodes within Merseyside.

28. During the Bonfire period, we estimate the service had a reach of 537,530 on Facebook, 438,818 on Twitter and 8,207 on Instagram. Our videos were viewed 37,899 times.

Staff Implications

29. 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 staff.
- Youth Engagement – Providing staffing and consultation with Children and Young People.
- Protection – Fireworks Legislation, compliance and enforcement
- Corporate Comms – Comms and Media Strategy
- Op. Response – HFSC Campaigns, CRM routes
- Op. Preparedness – Covid TAG, Ops Info Note.
- An additional IIT Officer was available at all times of high demand on key nights.
- Fire Control additional staffing operators over key nights.

30. MFRS staff supported the Trojan Fire Appliance, this was staffed on the 4th and 5th of November. The Trojan Fire Appliance is staffed by MFRS and Merseyside Police.

31. 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.

32. The Operational Support Room was utilised to support co-ordination of prevention, protection and response assets.

Legal Implications

33. ASB Powers utilised by partner agencies:

- Civil injunction
- Criminal behaviour order
- Dispersal power
- Community protection notice
- Public spaces protection order
- Closure power
- Absolute ground for possession

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.

35. Under the Explosives Regulations 2014 and the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, Protection Officers visited retailers storing fireworks for sale to ensure compliance with legislation.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

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

37. The Liverpool Citysafe Board provided additional funding (totalling £2000). This enabled the hire of 2 tipper trucks to be deployed in North and south Liverpool during the Bonfire period.

38. Wirral Council, Sefton 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 5 key nights where demands on MFRS were anticipated to increase, these were 30th and 31st October and the 4th, 5th, 6th November.

43. The Trojan Fire Appliance was utilised on the 4th and 5th November supported by Merseyside Police. The Trojan Fire Appliance carried out high visibility patrols of high demand areas.
44. 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.
45. 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.
46. MFRS maintained its attendance standard to life risk incidents throughout the bonfire period.

Contribution to Our Vision: *To be the best Fire & Rescue Service in the UK.*

Our Purpose: *Here to serve, Here to protect, Here to keep you safe.*

47. Effective joint working with our partners from the Police and Ambulance Service ensures the highest quality operational response is delivered to Merseyside residents.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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