

# **MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**11<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2021**

## **MINUTES**

**Present:** Cllr Leslie T. Byrom CBE (Chair) Councillors Pam Thomas, Sharon Connor, Kathy Hodson, Lynne Thompson, Janet Grace, Brian Kenny, Lesley Rennie, James Roberts, Elizabeth Hayden, Andrew Makinson, Gillian Wood, Lisa Preston, Edna Finneran, Hughie Malone, Linda Maloney & PCC Emily Spurrell

**Also Present:** CFO Phil Garrigan, Ria Groves, Ian Cummins & Anthony Boyle

**Apologies of absence were received from:** Cllr Hinnigan & Cllr Tweed

### **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.

Members resolved that:

- a) No declarations of interest were made by individual Members in relation to any item of business on the Agenda;
- 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 14<sup>th</sup> October 2021, were approved as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

### **3. OUTCOMES FROM CONSULTATION - CROXTETH AND AINTREE FIRE STATIONS**

Members considered Report CFO/058/21 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the outcomes of the twelve-week public consultation regarding the draft proposals to combine Aintree and Croxteth fire stations into a new superstation, including development of a Training and Development Academy and National Resilience Centre of Excellence, at a new site on Long Lane, Aintree.

Members were given a brief overview of the report.

The Chair of the Fire Authority commented that the superstation will be a legacy left for the future Authority. He added that this will improve the safety of crews and the people of Merseyside.

Members asked if Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service are satisfied that the build is environmentally friendly and were advised that it is and more details about that are in the following report.

Members enquired about response times and asked if there is a difference. Members were informed that the new superstation makes response times 2 seconds quicker. When a community fire station moves location, residents worry about this, but it is always guaranteed that response times stay the same or improve. There would also be more Home Fire Safety Check's in the community.

The Police & Crime Commissioner stated that this was a thorough consultation and that it is good to keep communication with the public so there are no misunderstandings.

Members resolved that:

- A) the outcomes of the comprehensive and informative public consultation process undertaken in relation to the proposals to combine Croxteth and Aintree fire stations, particularly the options for emergency fire cover in the Croxteth and Aintree area, be noted; and
- B) the outcomes when considering the FORMAL PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE LONG LANE SITE report on this agenda today, including development of a new Training and Development Academy and a National Resilience Centre of Excellence, be taken into account.

#### **4. FORMAL PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE LONG LANE SITE**

Members considered Report CFO/061/21 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the content of this report and having previously considered the associated consultation report, which is a separate item on this agenda, prior to giving approval to submit a formal planning application for the Long Lane site.

A presentation was given to Members by Group Manager Ben Ryder about the site on Long Lane.

Members were informed of the following:-

- The reason the move is wanted: as per Merseyside Fire & Rescue Services vision - the best facilities, equipment and staff, are needed to be the best Fire & Rescue Service.
- How the move will happen: the Authority has already approved the IRMP 21-24.

- Where we currently are: Aintree was built in 1926 and has no community facilities. Croxteth was built a little later but again has no community facilities and is landlocked.
- The new Long Lane site: is 12 acres, improves capability, is environmental and improves response standards. There would be Youth Engagement facilities, a Training & Development Academy and National Resilience facilities included. MFRS have a good record of station builds – Prescott, St Helens and Saughall Massie. The sustainability of the site and the environment are very important – the site will be carbon neutral. Staff wellbeing has been taken into account and a tranquil garden for their use has been incorporated onto the site. There will be electric vehicle charging points and a training area for various teaching to take place included complex skills (i.e. rail risks, rubble piles, and water). There is also classrooms built specifically for staff training and a state of the art Command & Control suite.

Members were advised that all managers and staff have contributed to the site project/station design and good relationships were formed between them and the architects.

Members asked if there are facilities on the site for outside personal would stay and were informed that there is not, but there are hotels near by and good public transportation/motorways, which would add to the local economy.

Members welcomed the added youth engagement facilities and asked if any costs would increase and if MFRS was confident about the cost of the build. Members were advised that costs can escalate but that this build would generate income through the National Resilience. Their budget for the build would be monitored and all finances considered.

Members queried whether Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) training would be taught at the new super station and were advised that it would be.

Members spoke of people with disabilities and asked if all options had been looked at for people with incapacities using/moving around the site/building. Members were advised that the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (ED&I) officer had been involved in the build and that there was also assistance from an Accessibility officer. MFRS consider all factors and welcome any comments or observations.

Members asked when the super station would be complete and were informed that the build should be fully built and operational by the end of 2023.

Members stated that they were thrilled that ED&I staff had been a part of the project and that it was good to hear that the facilities on the build were forward thinking. Members were informed that it was vital to also include the Staff Networks on the project and the ideas for gender neutral facilities were significant. MFRS is an inclusive organisation - the first female firefighter joined in 1990.

Members asked if there was any safeguarding in place in relation to the build as some firms go bust. Members were advised that a final health check is done on the company doing the work before the order is placed and work begins.

Members asked if Net Zero was taken into account on this project and were informed that the environment had been taken into account on this build and that there is also room for Net Zero facilities to be incorporated on the site in the future.

Members asked if there is any scope for changes to training in any way in the future. Members were advised that there is space on site to expand and that MFRS can adapt with any future changes to ensure that our communities are kept safe.

Members were advised that the financial cost decision would be brought to the Authority.

Members resolved that:

- A) progress on the proposed plans for a new multi pump superstation and Training and Development Academy/National Resilience Centre of Excellence at Long Lane, Aintree, be noted;
- B) that the IRMP proposal will increase the number of fire appliances available at the new station and across Merseyside (See Appendix 'A'), be noted; and
- C) the submission of a formal planning application for the Long Lane Site. (See Appendix 'B'), having considered the outcomes from the consultation process in relation to the combination of Aintree and Croxteth Fire Stations (CFO/058/21), be approved.

## **5. PFI Contract - Re-financing of the senior debt**

Members considered Report CFO/061/21 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the new owners of the PFI Contract Bilfinger Berger Global Infrastructure (BBGI) having initiated a scoping exercise to consider refinancing of the senior debt within the PFI Contract.

The report identified a potential financial saving from the refinancing of senior debt.

Members asked what the saving would be used for and were advised that firstly all three Authorities need to agree on its use and the agreed consensus was that a lump sum payment would be sought rather than a reduction in the monthly unitary charges. The actual lump sum saving would then be reported in the quarter three financial review report, and would make a recommendation on the use of the lump sum saving. The Director of Finance and Procurement suggested that it could be used to increase the new TDA capital reserve.

Members resolved that:

- a) the contents of the report, be noted; and

- b) the signing of any re-financing deal is delegated to the Director of Finance and Procurement, following consultation with the CFO and Chair of the Authority.

## **6. FPS Immediate detriment framework**

Members considered Report CFO/060/21 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning adopting the framework agreed by the Local Government Association (LGA) and Fire Brigade's Union (FBU) for processing eligible Fire Pension Scheme(s) "Immediate Detriment" cases, prior to legislation being passed to remedy age discrimination following the McCloud / Sargeant ruling.

Members were given a brief overview of the report.

Members questioned the recommendation and asked if it should say that Members agree to adopt the memorandum rather than consider adopting it. A response was given to Members stating that this was a valid point, the Director of Finance & Procurement wanted to leave the decision up to Members, which is why it was worded that way.

There are two benefits to accepting the immediate detriment framework which are:

- avoiding further legal action by the FBU; and
- there will be a need to correct the benefits calculated under the framework once legislation comes out in October 2023, but by using national framework there would hopefully be a recommended standard approach from the LGA on how these corrections could be actioned.

By allowing the eligible FPS members access to their legacy pension immediately it will mean the Authority will face significant administration and compensation charges.

Members queried the £300,000 that is already in the pension reserve fund and asked are they correct in assuming the £300,000 cost referred to in the report is in addition to this. Members were advised that the estimated costs have increased to £600,000 as the LGA/FBU framework allows retired FPS members the ability to access legacy pension benefits, which the HO agreement did not. The quarter two financial review will consider how the additional costs can be funded and Members will receive this report at Policy & Resources Committee on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

Members asked if the £300,000 was for every year and were advised it is an estimated total cost for the period up to 2023-24. Members were informed that any further changes to this cost would be reported back to Members.

Members decided to amend the recommendation so the wording states that the memorandum is agreed to be adopted.

Members resolved that:

the LGA and FBU Memorandum of Understanding and Immediate Detriment Framework for processing eligible Fire Pension Scheme (FPS) member applications for immediate access to their legacy pension benefits, be adopted.

**7. CONTRACT AWARD FOR STRUCTURAL FIRE GLOVES**

Members considered Report CFO/059/21 of the Director of Finance & Procurement, concerning:

- 1) the North West Fire and Rescue Procurement Group invited tenders for the supply of firefighter leather fire gloves; and
- 2) the potential value of orders over the life of the contract may exceed £250,000 the Authority is required to approve the award of the contract.

Members were given a brief overview of the report.

Members resolved that:

the award of a framework agreement on behalf of North West Fire and Rescue Authorities with Bennetts Safetywear Limited for the supply of firefighter leather fire gloves, be approved.

Close

Date of next meeting: 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022

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

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_