

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	AUTHORITY		
DATE:	16 MAY 2024	REPORT NO:	CFO/26/24
PRESENTING OFFICER:	MONITORING OFFICER RIA GROVES		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	RIA GROVES	REPORT AUTHOR:	RIA GROVES
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TEAM		
TITLE OF REPORT:	OVERVIEW OF SCRUTINY 2023-2024		

APPENDICES:	APPENDIX A	SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PLAN 2023-2025
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Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members with an update of the progress made during this municipal year 2023/2024 by the Scrutiny Committee with topics on the Scrutiny Forward Work Plan.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that Members note the continued work of the Scrutiny Committee throughout 2023/24 and the matters considered from the Scrutiny Forward Work Plan.

Introduction and Background

3. The Scrutiny Forward Work Plan was created as a result of Members of the Scrutiny Committee attending a scrutiny workshop presented by Officers across the organisation. Due to the number of items Members wanted to review and scrutinise further, a two-year Scrutiny Forward Work Plan was proposed.
4. Members will recall the Scrutiny Forward Work Plan was approved by the Authority at the meeting of the 12th October 2023, a copy of which is contained in Appendix A.
5. This report details those items from the Scrutiny Forward Work Plan which were presented and considered by the Scrutiny Committee throughout this municipal year.

Health, Safety & Welfare Annual Report 2022/23

6. The Scrutiny Committee considered the report and presentation by Group Manager Craig Whitfield on the Health, Safety & Welfare Annual Report 2022/23 which is a retrospective overview of the Authority's performance for the previous year. The report and accompanying presentation set out the background on what data was collated through the year with a focus on injuries at work, road traffic collisions, the near miss reporting and culture, as well as any significant changes on these issues pre and post Covid to understand the impact thereof. Members of the Committee asked questions and raised matters on all areas of the report and Members expressed their gratitude in receiving the report, noting how easy it was to read, in particular due to the volume of data contained therein.
7. It was resolved that the performance outcomes against the health, safety and welfare targets of the Authority for 2022/23 had been scrutinised. As a result of information shared with Members in relation to road traffic collisions and low speed collisions, it was also agreed leaflets on parking were to be shared with the Authority Members and a leaflet drop on busy streets was to be considered.

The Environment and the Impact on Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service's Operational Response - Wildfire Specialism

8. The Scrutiny Committee considered the report and presentation submitted by Station Manager John Kellaway as a National Wildfire Tactical Advisor. The presentation provided an in-depth description of wildfires and their causes. It was agreed that the introduction of the Wildfire Specialism into Operational Response capabilities of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service be noted, and an update be brought back to Members in 12 months' time on any developments and further engagement with stakeholders.

Staff Sickness Absence

9. The Scrutiny Committee considered the report and accompanying presentation on staff sickness absence for the last three years as presented by Nick Mernock, Director of People, Organisational Development Legal and Democratic Services and Kelly Patterson, Health and Wellbeing Manager & Psychotherapist. As a result of the report and accompanying presentation, Members agreed a Task and Finish Group should be established to allow Members to scrutinise this matter in greater detail.
10. Members of the Task and Finish Group were Councillors Paul Tweed, Dave Hanratty, Linda Maloney, Pat Moloney and Ed Lamb. At the initial meeting it was agreed the areas of focus would be musculoskeletal injuries and mental health which were identified as some of the reasons for long term sickness absence. Additional data such as the number of shifts lost, appliance availability and costs to the Service were provided to Members at the subsequent meeting and key officers also attended to provide more detail on the issues. The findings were reported to the next full Scrutiny Committee in April 2024. Amongst other things, the Task and Finish Group had found the work undertaken by Officers to support

staff was of a high standard and wanted this work to continue with the following recommendations being made:

- (a) to promote the health benefits of walking, cycling, and expanding health promotions to also include diabetes;
- (b) to collaborate nationally on any trends or best practices in managing staff sickness absences (including feedback to the National Fire Chiefs Council);
- (c) for Officers to continue to review the mental health and wellbeing support provided to staff;
- (d) for the staff sickness absence data to be included in the health, safety and welfare annual review and;
- (e) to write to the Local Government Association to request a review of the impact of musculoskeletal absences nationally within the sector by collating the relevant data including by reference to age of those affected.

Staff Survey

11. The Scrutiny Committee considered the report and accompanying presentation from the Director of Strategy and Performance Deb Appleton and Community Engagement Advisor Michelle Kirk. The report and accompanying presentation set out the response from the previous staff survey held in 2022 and the actions undertaken by Officers as a result of that feedback. Members of the Committee asked questions and/or raised matters on a number of issues on this topic and it was agreed that the content of the report be noted.

Employee/Work Life Balance (Hybrid Working)

12. The Scrutiny Committee were presented with a report which was accompanied by a presentation detailing the ongoing trial of hybrid working within the Service. Director of People and Organisational Development Nick Mernock detailed the outcome of consultations with staff on the impact of hybrid working within the workplace. Members asked questions regarding the impact of this trial and it was agreed the report be noted.

Scrutiny Forward Work Plan

13. At each meeting the Scrutiny Committee Members considered a report submitted by the Monitoring Officer that sought views on the Scrutiny Forward Work Plan and the identification of potential topics for the Committee to review. Members were advised that the document remained 'live' and as such, could be added to, as Members determine as appropriate.

Equality and Diversity Implications

14. There are no direct equality, diversity and inclusion implications arising out of this report. The topics scrutinised by the Scrutiny Committee which may have contained implications relating to equality, diversity and inclusion were detailed within the relevant report presented at that committee meeting.

Staff Implications

15. There are no direct staffing implications arising out of this report.

Legal Implications

16. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

17. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Risk Management and Health Implications

18. There are no direct risk management or health and safety implications arising out of this report. The topics scrutinised by the Scrutiny Committee which may have contained implications relating to risk management and health implications were detailed within the relevant report presented at that Committee meeting.

Environmental Implications

19. There are no direct environmental implications arising out of this report. The topics scrutinised by the Scrutiny Committee which may have contained implications relating to the environment were detailed within the relevant report presented at that committee meeting.

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.*

20. The continued scrutiny of the service the Authority provides its community ensures greater transparency, accountability and quality to those it aims to serve, protect and keep safe.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NONE

GLOSSARY OF TERMS
