

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

21 MARCH 2024

PUBLIC MINUTES

Present: **Councillors** James Roberts (Chair), Edna Finneran (Substitute for Sue Murphy), Barbara Murray, Dave Hanratty, Terry Byron, Gillian Wood, Les Byrom, Pat Moloney and Lesley Rennie.

Also Present: Chief Fire Officer Phil Garrigan
Director of Finance and Procurement Mike Rea
Monitoring Officer Ria Groves

21. Apologies

Apologies of absence were received from Councillor Sue Murphy.

22. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made by Members at this meeting.

23. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on Thursday 14th December 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

24. Service Delivery Plan 2023-24 Oct-Dec update

Chief Fire Officer Phil Garrigan introduced the Service Delivery Plan and provided an update for the October–December 2023-24 period.

The Chief Fire Officer discussed Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service's performance and progress against the Functional Plans and the IRMP objectives.

Members' attention was drawn to page 22 which displayed the emergency calls received in Fire Control and noted the Service's proactive prevention and protection activity for the 2023–24 period.

It was reported that there had been a reduction in the volume of calls to date, with Fire Control handling 15,991 calls, which was 4,299 fewer than this time last year. It was also noted that, compared to previous years, 97.7% of calls were responded to within 10 seconds.

The Chief Fire Officer praised the staff in Fire Control for their outstanding performance.

Members were made aware of the two accidental dwelling fire fatalities, which were contained on page 26 of the report, and were advised that a correction had been made following the cause of death determination by the coroner. Members were informed that one of the two fatalities was not caused by fire, and it was concluded to be a cardiac arrest.

The Chief Fire Officer reported that only one fatality would be recorded for the cumulative period. It was added that the Authority were approaching the end of this period of monitoring, and it was noted that if there was no further loss of life, it would be the lowest number of accidental fire deaths ever recorded by the Authority. The Chief Fire Officer added on behalf of the Authority, everybody's sincere condolences for the family and the communities of Merseyside associated with the fatalities.

It was noted that on page 30, the performance indicators recognised a requirement for work to take place in relation to false alarms due to an increase in incidents.

Councillor Hanratty also discussed his concerns around false alarms and it was noted that the numbers of false calls were increasing again. Councillor Hanratty enquired if there was anything Members could assist with relating to recurring patterns of false alarms from hospitals and student accommodation or if data was available in respect of any trends identified.

The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that data had been collated over a significant period of time in relation to the performance of the Service. The data demonstrated a strong performance by the Service with a reduction to all, if not most incidents, with the exception of special service calls. Members were advised that this was due to special service calls being predicated by the Authority's statutory duty to collaborate with other blue light partners and the Service contributing to incidents which could include gaining entry to premises where vulnerable individuals were located.

Members were also reassured that the incidents relating to fire had reduced over a 10-year period, particularly the last 5-year period. The Chief Fire Officer discussed the national benchmark which was over a 10-year period with a 16% reduction in accidental dwelling fires. Members were also advised that in Merseyside the reduction in dwelling fires was actually 32%. The Chief Fire Officer believed that this reinforced why the Authority was described as 'outstanding' in its latest inspection from HMCIFRS around its work on community safety and prevention.

Members were also informed that in the same 10-year time period, unwanted fire signals had put a significant demand on the Service, and as a result, a change in policy in how the Service responded to such calls was approved which had resulted in a reduction in the number of calls received. However, Members were reassured that if the Service had any concerns about life risk the Service would continue to respond. Therefore, the majority of calls the Service responded to involved premises with a life risk such as care homes and sheltered accommodation. Members were informed that the reasons for the unwanted fire signals varied, consisting of different factors which

can include an occupier or apparatus. However, unwanted fire signals remained an ongoing challenge and it was an area that the protection team were focused on.

Councillor Byron questioned whether the Service was attending all false calls if it sounded like a fake call. The Chief Fire Officer emphasised that Fire Control would challenge if any caller sounded inauthentic and Fire Control would deal with the situation appropriately. It was also added by the Chief Fire Officer that arrangements were in place regarding challenging calls, and it was advised that Fire Control Officers were trained on receiving suspicious calls.

Members' attention was drawn to page 61, Paragraph 1.7, and it was explained that it included essential information about the Authority's legal responsibility to cooperate and work with the Northwest Ambulance Service (NWAS).

The Chief Fire Officer explained that the Service do an extensive amount of work alongside NWAS, relating to special services calls.

It was explained that the Authority could support cardiac arrest incidents, and the Authority knew that trained firefighters would assist with defibrillation and provide an effective response. Additionally, it was noted that ongoing national discussions around the role of a firefighter were taking place and therefore the extent of the collaboration with NWAS was currently marked as red on the Service Delivery Plan, indicating that the action was not yet complete.

Councillor Rennie requested further information about people who live alone and use oxygen and how this was managed by the Authority when attending incidents.

The Chief Fire Officer reassured Members that the home safety discharge assessment was a crucial step of any patient being discharged from hospital and there was a dependency on the respective hospital trust to ensure a referral was made back to the Service.

Also, it was added that as part of data and information sharing, the Authority should know where oxygen was held in homes across Merseyside. It was explained to Members that the Service would then target any vulnerable person and action any Home Fire Safety Check (HFSC) intervention and a Safe and Wellbeing Assessment would be undertaken.

Members were advised by Councillor Byrom that the rating for implementing recommendations from the Grenfell Inquiry was also red, but the Authority was relying on other services and departments to complete certain requirements to progress.

Councillor Byrom explained that some of the actions promised under Grenfell were the responsibility of the government.

Councillor Moloney noted that there were six hybrid vehicles due for delivery in March and he asked if they were plug-in hybrids or none plug-ins. Members' were advised that the vehicles were plug-in hybrids. The Chief Fire Officer discussed that the Authority was strongly committed to 'going green' but that the vehicles needed to equally function effectively.

RESOLVED that Service Delivery Plan reports (Appendices 1–11) for publication on the website be approved.

25. Service Delivery Plan 2024-25

The Chief Fire Officer, Phil Garrigan, presented the report and explained that the station plans were tailored and bespoke to the station areas. It was explained that the report presented the Authority's intentions for the next 12 months, including the ambitions and plans for the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), functional plans, and station plans.

The Merseyside plan was distilled down into functional areas, including prevention, response, protection, and preparedness. It was added that local management teams looked at risks in their community. The Chief Fire Officer noted that some stations had specialist capabilities, as reflected in the CRMP.

Members were advised that the performance indicators for 2023–24 were used to identify the key performance indicators for 2024–25.

The Chair of the Authority, Councillor Byrom, drew Members' attention to the forward-looking report from April onwards which explained that Aintree Fire Station and Croxteth Fire Station were being merged into the new Aintree Fire Station alongside the new Training and Development Academy (TDA) Building.

With regards to sharing information with the districts, Members were advised that the report taken to Members was not the version that the partner districts would receive. It was explained that the Authority would incorporate the districts' feedback into the CRMP proposal.

It was confirmed to Members that the station plans for Aintree and Croxteth were still deliberately included whilst the stations remained operational. It was explained to Members that once the stations were closed and the new Aintree Fire Station opened at the new TDA site, only one station plan would remain.

RESOLVED that the attached Service Delivery Plan (Appendix A) and Station Plans for 2024/25 (Appendices B-X) be approved.

26. Bulk Fuel Contract Under New CCS Framework

The Chief Fire Officer, Phil Garrigan, presented the report that outlined the fuel consumption of the Service and how fuel was supplied. The Chief Fire Officer also noted that the Authority had eight diesel tanks as a contingency plan as part of its business continuity arrangements.

It was noted that the Service was moving towards hybrid vehicles, but the Authority had not moved to all-electric vehicles, and it was explained that the Authority was required to maintain the fuel supplier as an effective way of responding to emergencies using the Authority's existing fleet.

The Chief Fire Officer emphasised the importance of ensuring that the Authority provided diesel fuel to the fire appliances and officers' vehicles to be able to respond effectively to any incidents across Merseyside.

The Chair, Councillor Roberts, queried how long the CCS (Crown Commercial Services) Framework had been in place. The Chief Fire Officer advised that the framework had been in use for a number of years, and Members were advised that further information would be provided in due course.

RESOLVED that the award of a contract estimated at £500,000 from 01/04/24 to 31/03/26 for the provision of bulk fuel supplies under Crown Commercial Services RM6177 framework agreement awarding to Standard Fuel be approved.

27. Proposed Refurbishment of Bromborough Fire Station

This minute contains exempt information by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Close

Date of next meeting, Thursday 25th July 2024.

Signed _____

Date _____