

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

15 MAY 2025

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Leslie T. Byrom CBE (Chair), Councillor James Roberts, Councillor Jeanie Bell, Councillor Edna Finneran, Councillor Janet Grace, Councillor Dave Hanratty, Councillor Lynn O'Keeffe, Councillor Doreen Knight, Councillor Ed Lamb, Councillor Andrew Makinson, Councillor Chris Page, Councillor Lesley Rennie and Councillor Lynne Thompson

In Attendance: Nick Searle, Chief Fire Officer
Ria Groves, Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer
Mike Rea, Director of Finance and Procurement
David Mottram, Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Ged Sheridan, Assistant Chief Fire Officer

43. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gorst, Murray, Kenny, Wood, Dickinson and the Police and Crime Commissioner Emily Spurrell.

The Chair noted that Councillors Murray and Kenny were leaving the Authority to take on the role of Mayor in their respective districts and the Members wished them both the best of luck in those roles.

44. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest in relation to any item on the agenda.

45. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 27th February 2025 be approved as an accurate record, subject to an amendment to the attendance to state that Councillor Knight had sent apologies and Councillor Page was in attendance.

46. Annual Scrutiny Review 2024-25

Monitoring Officer, Ria Groves, presented the Annual Scrutiny Review for 2024/25 noting that the Committee had scrutinised five topics over the course of the municipal year as highlighted in paragraphs 7-20 of the report.

It was acknowledged that the Scrutiny Forward Work Plan for 2023-25 had been ambitious in terms of the topics it covered and it was noted that there were three remaining topics from the Plan for the Committee to scrutinise. Members were advised that following the upcoming Annual General Meeting, a workshop would

be arranged for the Members appointed to the Scrutiny Committee to agree a new Scrutiny Forward Work Plan for 2025-26 with the outstanding items from 2024/25 to be included.

Councillor Hanratty noted that the Scrutiny Committee had managed to undertake a great breadth of work that had been beneficial for Members. He noted that alternative fuels had been a topic of discussion at a recent Committee meeting and asked if a report on alternative fuels would be referred to the Authority to consider.

Ria Groves noted that Members had been advised that the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) had yet to take a formal position on this topic and that when the NFCC published the collective stance on this issue then that would be shared with the Members. Chief Fire Officer Nick Searle noted the significant amount of work currently being undertaken in the sector on lithium ion in particular and highlighted the Authority's involvement in this work. He expected more information on that topic would become available over the next 12 months and Members would be updated accordingly.

Councillor Finneran, Chair of Scrutiny, asked if it would be possible for an Officer of the Authority to present on alternative fuels to the districts given the complexity of the issue. The Chief Fire Officer agreed to work alongside the Monitoring Officer to consider how that request could best be supported. The Chair, Councillor Les Byrom, felt this would be welcomed across the districts.

Members of the Scrutiny Committee were thanked for their hard work and diligence over the last municipal year.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the continued work of the Scrutiny Committee throughout 2024/25 and the matters considered from the Scrutiny Forward Work Plan be noted; and
- b) those items forming part of the Scrutiny Forward Work Plan 2023-25 that remain outstanding (Management of Contaminates, Enforcement and Protection and Pathway to Net Zero-Fleet Management) be carried forward into 2025/26 be approved.

47. Scientific Support Services Contract

Chief Fire Officer, Nick Searle presented the report noting the Authority's role as Lead Authority for National Resilience and informed Members that the contract covered training related to incidents involving unknown chemicals. The increase in the cost was a result of additional courses being provided for Fire and Rescue Services with DIM advisors to allow them to maintain response due to changes in their staffing such as retirement.

It was noted that all costs would be met through the Authority's current arrangements with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

(MHCLG) and the Chair noted that this additional level of scrutiny being provided by the Authority was welcomed by central government.

RESOLVED that the contract amendment for the contract value to exceed £300,000 (estimated to be £322,203.95) and allow the remainder of courses scheduled to be delivered by the supplier Bureau Veritas UK, between June 2025 and end of contract 6th August 2025 be approved.

48. Procurement of Radio Packsets

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Dave Mottram presented the report which related to the procurement of radio packsets used for communication at an incident. It was explained that increasing the number of packsets on each appliance would help the Authority to fulfil Recommendation 8 of the Grenfell Enquiry Phase 2 Recommendations to improve access to radio communications.

It was noted that the Authority would also be procuring packsets for National Resilience as part of its role as Lead Authority.

The Chair referenced concerns about severe criticism faced by Motorola that had arisen as part of a Select Committee that highlighted excessive charging and profiteering by the company. Members were advised the issues referenced by the Chair related to an airwave project and the procurement of the packsets was not a part of this and therefore no ongoing charges or rental fees would be sought by Motorola as part of this procurement.

RESOLVED that the award of the contract to Radiocom Systems Limited for Motorola Radio packsets for £319,834 be approved.

Close

Date of next meeting Thursday, 12 June 2025