

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	AUTHORITY		
DATE:	15 MAY 2025	REPORT NO:	CFO/97/25
PRESENTING OFFICER	HEAD OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & MONITORING OFFICER , RIA GROVES		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	MONITORING OFFICER, RIA GROVES	REPORT AUTHOR:	MONITORING OFFICER, RIA GROVES
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	SCRUTINY COMMITTEE STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP		
TITLE OF REPORT:	ANNUAL SCRUTINY REVIEW 2024-25		
APPENDICES:	APPENDIX A: SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PLAN 2023-25		

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members with a review of the work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee in 2024/25.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that Members;
 - a) note the continued work of the Scrutiny Committee throughout 2024/25 and the matters considered from the Scrutiny Forward Work Plan; and
 - b) approve 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.

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.
4. Due to the number of items Members wanted to review and scrutinise further, a two-year Scrutiny Forward Work Plan was proposed. Members will recall the Scrutiny Forward Work Plan was approved by the Authority at the meeting of the 12th October 2023 as 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 for 2024/25.
6. In 2024/25 the Scrutiny Committee met three times to consider areas of focus from the Scrutiny Forward Work Plan as below:

Meeting	Topics Discussed
23/07/2024	Organisational Culture
25/02/2025	Update on Grenfell Recommendations
	Health and Safety Annual Review
10/04/2025	Operational Response to Flooding
	Alternative Fuels and Energy Systems

Organisational Culture

7. The Chief Fire Officer presented a 'Review of Organisational Culture' to Members.
8. The Chief Fire Officer detailed the set of recommendations from HMICFRS, the review of London Fire Brigade and other cultural reviews the Authority felt were pertinent to its own culture. These included recommendations relating to reporting concerns, conducting background checks, handling misconduct, leadership/management, training and development, capturing diversity data and enhancing diversity. The Chief Fire Officer noted the importance of setting the organisational culture, with a specific emphasis on leadership and diversity as outlined in the Authority's Cultural Action Plan and People Plan.
9. The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee expressed his gratitude to the Chief Fire Officer and to all staff for their dedication despite national criticism of emergency services and highlighted the noteworthy progress made to date. It was agreed Members noted the work undertaken on organisational culture within the Authority and that a further report be brought back to Members the following municipal year to provide an update of the continued progress.

Update on Grenfell Recommendations

10. Group Manager Dave Watson delivered a presentation detailing the advancements made by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service ('Service') in relation to the Phase 1 recommendations, from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry comprising of 46 recommendations with 98% of the recommendations already implemented across the Service.
11. Members were also advised that further to the release of the Phase 2 report an additional 58 recommendations have been published with a gap analysis having been conducted by Officers, highlighting aspects that pertained to the Service.

12. The Chair praised Dave Watson for his clear and well-structured presentation, commenting on how easy it was to follow and understand. Members noted the progress of the work undertaken on behalf of the Authority.

Health, Safety & Welfare Annual Report 2024/25

13. The Scrutiny Committee considered the report and presentation by Group Manager Craig Whitfield on the Health, Safety & Welfare Annual Report against its Local Performance Indicators (LPIs) for Health and Safety during 2023/24 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 to understand the impact thereof. Craig Whitfield emphasised the importance of reporting injuries and near misses, as it was crucial for improving safety and operational effectiveness. Members were assured as to the compliance with corporate policies, legal requirements, and health and safety practices.
14. Members of the Committee asked questions and raised matters on all areas of the report including the performance around welfare and mental health. It was resolved that the performance outcomes against the health, safety and welfare targets of the Authority for 2023/24 had been scrutinised with the positive progress and safety culture noted.

The Environment and the Impact on Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service's Operational Response – Flooding Specialism

15. The Scrutiny Committee considered the report and presentation by Group Manager Chris Barratt. The presentation provided an in-depth depiction of flooding, and the response provided by the Service locally, nationally and internationally.
16. Members were advised that extensive work is undertaken with partners as part of the Local Resilience Forum with flooding identified as a major foreseeable risk whilst being assured as to the training, skills and equipment provided to staff in anticipation of the response provided. As part of the CRMP the Service has also committed to prevention advice beyond fire safety which will include safety advice for residents in flood prone areas.
17. Members acknowledged the outstanding response provided as part of the flood capability and noted the report.

Alternative Fuels and Energy Systems

18. Group Manager John O'Boyle provided Members with changes facing the fire sector and how the Service responds to incidents following the emergence of alternative fuels. Members were advised that work across the sector is being conducted to learn more about alternative fuels, any such risks they may present and identify best practice in respect of responding to such incidents.

19. Members were reassured that the Authority was actively engaged in national efforts to educate the public and promote safety. Members were further reassured that although new technology and alternative fuels were developing quickly, which is a new risk moving forward, firefighters' safety remained the Authority's priority.
20. It was agreed by Members to note the report and should the NFCC reflect an agreed position across the sector on alternative fuels that this is presented to Members to consider along with any additional support of the same.

Scrutiny Forward Work Plan

21. 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.
22. As this Scrutiny Forward Work Plan comes to an end, it is noted that the following items remain outstanding: Management of Contaminates Enforcement and Prosecution Action and Pathway to Net Zero (fleet management). The remaining items are a result of the ambitious plan put forward for 2023-2025 and it is recommended that these remaining items form part of the Scrutiny Forward Work Plan for 2025-2026.
23. At the beginning of the next municipal year, Members of the Scrutiny Committee will be provided with topics recently suggested by its Members along with an overview of further potential topics by the Scrutiny Officer to consider when devising a new Scrutiny Forward Work Plan.

Equality and Diversity Implications

24. There are no direct equality, diversity or inclusion implications for the annual overview of the scrutiny topics presented throughout the year.

Staff Implications

25. The Democratic Services team will work with Members and arrange meetings accordingly.

Legal Implications

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

Financial Implications & Value for Money

27. There are no direct financial considerations arising from this report.

Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications

28. There are no direct implications arising out of this report.

Environmental Implications

29. There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

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.*

30. The scrutiny of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Services actions contained on the Scrutiny Forward Work Plan, provides a transparent and accountable process.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

CFO/94/25 Scrutiny Forward Work Plan

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CRMP Community Risk Management Plan