

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

12 JUNE 2025

MINUTES

Present: **Councillors** Les Byrom (Chair), Jeanie Bell, Edna Finneran, Jan Grace, Doreen Knight, Grahame McManus, Lynn O'Keeffe, Chris Page, James Roberts, Mike Sullivan, Heather Westhead, Sam Gorst, Andrew Makinson, Kieran Murphy and Lesley Rennie.

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

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Jeanette Banks, Lynne Thompson, Dave Hanratty and Police and Crime Commissioner, Emily Spurrell.

2. Declarations of Interest

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

3. Appointment of Chair

The Monitoring Officer, Ria Groves, asked for nominations for the appointment of the Chair of the Authority for 2025/26.

Nominee:

Councillor Les Byrom – nominated by Councillor James Roberts and seconded by Councillor Jan Grace.

No further nominations were made.

RESOLVED that Councillor Les Byrom be appointed as Chair of the Authority for 2025/26.

4. Appointment of Vice Chair

Nominations were requested for the positions of the Vice Chair/s for the municipal year 2025/26.

Nominee:

Councillor James Roberts – nominated by Councillor Les Byrom and seconded by Councillor Doreen Knight.

Councillor Jan Grace – nominated by Councillor Les Byrom and seconded by Councillor Doreen Knight.

RESOLVED that Councillors James Roberts and Jan Grace be appointed as Vice-Chairs of the Authority for 2025/26.

Councillor Les Byrom thanked Members for his nomination. He also thanked the Senior Leadership Team for their hard work over the past year and acknowledged the change to the Leadership Team whilst looking forward to the year ahead. He wished Legal and Democratic Services Manager, Shauna Healey, every success during her maternity leave.

5. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 15th May 2025 be approved as an accurate record.

6. Membership of the Authority

The Chair placed on record his thanks to those Councillors leaving the Authority (Cllrs Kenny, Murray, Wood, Lamb and Dickinson) and welcomed new Councillors to the Authority (Cllrs Banks, McManus, Sullivan, Westhead and Murphy) who had been appointed for this municipal year.

Monitoring Officer, Ria Groves, introduced the report and noted that at the previous AGM in 2021, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Emily Spurrell had been appointed, and it was recommended that her membership be continued. Co-opted Member, Anthony Boyle had previously been appointed to the Scrutiny and Audit Committee as a non-voting Member to add additional independence and this was also recommended to continue. Monitoring Officer, Ria Groves drew Members' attention to paragraph four of the report which detailed the membership for the Authority for 2025-26.

Councillor Les Byrom thanked all Officers at every level, on behalf of the Authority, for the service provided.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the membership of the Authority further to the appointments by the five district councils in Merseyside be noted;
- b) the continued appointment of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Merseyside to the Authority be noted; and
- c) the continued role of the Co-opted Member and for the Co-opted Member to continue to be appointed to both the Audit Committee and Scrutiny Committee, as a non-voting member (subject to approval of the structure) be approved.

7. Structure of the Authority

Councillor Les Byrom presented the report and drew Members' attention to paragraph seven of the report, which detailed the existing structure and the proposal to keep the same for 2025-26. The committee structure and membership thereof had been circulated and confirmed prior to the meeting.

The Chair also confirmed those Members undertaking a role attracting a Special Responsibility Allowance.

Members agreed the following structure:

Committee Structure 2025/26	
Committee	Members
Community Safety & Protection Committee 9 Members (6,1,1,1)	1. Cllr Jan Grace (Chair) 2. Cllr Jeanette Banks 3. Cllr Edna Finneran 4. Cllr Doreen Knight 5. Cllr Chris Page 6. Cllr Mike Sullivan 7. Cllr Lynne Thompson 8. Cllr Kieran Murphy 9. Cllr Lesley Rennie
Policy & Resources Committee 9 Members (7,1,1)	1. Cllr James Roberts (Chair) 2. Cllr Jeanie Bell 3. Cllr Les Byrom 4. Cllr Dave Hanratty 5. Cllr Grahame McManus 6. Cllr Lynn O'Keeffe 7. Cllr Heather Westhead 8. Cllr Andrew Makinson 9. Cllr Lesley Rennie
Audit Committee 6 Members (4,1,1) (Plus 1 Co-opted Member*)	1. Cllr Jeanie Bell (Chair) 2. Cllr Grahame McManus 3. Cllr Lynn O'Keeffe 4. Cllr Chris Page 5. Cllr Andrew Makinson 6. Cllr Sam Gorst 7. Anthony Boyle*

Scrutiny Committee 9 Members (6,1, 1, 1) (Plus 1 Co-opted Member*)	1. Cllr Edna Finneran (Chair) 2. Cllr Jeanette Banks 3. Cllr Dave Hanratty 4. Cllr Doreen Knight 5. Cllr Mike Sullivan 6. Cllr Heather Westhead 7. Cllr Andrew Makinson 8. Cllr Kieran Murphy 9. Cllr Sam Gorst 10. Anthony Boyle*
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Appointments Committee (3,1) Made up of the Chair, Vice Chairs, and Party Group Leaders	1. Cllr Les Byrom (Chair) 2. Cllr Jan Grace 3. Cllr James Roberts 4. Cllr Lynne Thompson
Appeals Committee (3,1) Made up of the Chair, Vice Chairs, and Party Group Leaders	1. Cllr Les Byrom (Chair) 2. Cllr Jan Grace 3. Cllr James Roberts 4. Cllr Lynne Thompson
Joint Fire & Police Collaboration Committee 4 Members (3,1) Made up of the Chair, Vice Chairs, and 1 Opposition Spokesperson (Plus, PCC)	1. Cllr Les Byrom (Chair) 2. Cllr Jan Grace 3. Cllr James Roberts 4. Cllr Lynne Thompson
Member Development & Engagement Group (3,1)	1. Cllr Lynn O'Keeffe (Chair) 2. Cllr Jeanette Banks 3. Cllr Heather Westhead 4. Cllr Lynne Thompson

The Chair confirmed appointment to the other role that did not attract a Special Responsibility Allowance.

This included the Lead Members which had been provided prior to the meeting as per below:

Preparedness	Councillor Edna Finneran
People	Councillor Jan Grace
Response	Councillor Lesley Rennie
Prevention	Councillor Doreen Knight
Protection	Councillor Jeanie Bell

Pension Board – Councillor Chris Page.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the committees to be determined were approved as in appendix A of the report;
- b) the number of voting Members to be appointed to each Committee was determined and approved in accordance with appendix B;
- c) the number of seats on each Committee to be allocated to each political group in accordance with the political balance regulations was determined and approved in accordance with appendix B;
- d) an alternative from the relevant political group already appointed to the Authority can attend a Committee in the absence of the substantive Member be approved;
- e) the Members who are to be appointed to the Committees and roles attracting a Special Responsibility Allowance, in accordance with the wishes of the relevant political group, in respect of those seats allocated to that group had were confirmed ;
- f) the nominations proposed by the Chair for the Lead Member roles were confirmed;
- g) the nomination proposed by the Chair prior to the meeting for the Employer Representative on the Local Pension Board be confirmed; and
- h) Members will inform Democratic Services prior to the start of any meeting if an alternative Member is attending on their behalf be confirmed.

8. Meeting dates for 25/26

Councillor Les Byrom noted that the report included a list of dates for meetings and events for the upcoming municipal year. It was explained that there was flexibility in the dates, and they could change if required. Members were made aware that the Authority Committee on 7th May had been provisionally changed to 14th May. The Chair proposed to change the date of Authority Committee scheduled in the report for 7th May 2026 to 14th May 2026, which was supported by Members.

Members were encouraged to attend as many meetings and events as possible and Councillor Byrom reminded Members of the upcoming Member Induction on 16th June.

RESOLVED that

- (a) the schedule of meeting dates and events for 2025/26 be considered and approved; and

(b) the amended date of the Authority Committee meeting from 7th May 2026 to 14th May 2026 be approved.

9. Questions on Discharge of Functions

The following Members were nominated as responsible for questions on discharge of functions for each District Council:

Liverpool	Councillor James Roberts
Knowsley	Councillor Edna Finneran
St Helens	Councillor Jeanie Bell
Sefton	Councillor Les Byrom
Wirral	Councillor Mike Sullivan

RESOLVED that the five Members (one from each constituent District Council) nominated above as the Member responsible for answering questions within their respective Council on the discharge of functions of the Authority be appointed.

10. Appointment of Membership to Outside Bodies

The Chair presented the report which detailed the Authority's current membership to various outside bodies.

Members agreed to continue the Authority's affiliation with the following organisations and confirmation was provided as to the relevant representative for each respective outside body.

Organisation	Representative
Local Government Association Fire Services Commission	Councillors Les Byrom, James Roberts and Jan Grace
North West Employers Organisation	Councillor James Roberts
North West Fire and Rescue Advisory Forum	Councillor Les Byrom
Association of the Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Authorities	Councillor Les Byrom, James Roberts and Jan Grace
Liverpool City Region Growth Platform	Area Manager Prevention and Area Manager Protection

RESOLVED that:

- a) the current affiliations to outside bodies be noted;
- b) the continued affiliation with the Local Government Association and who the representatives appointed to the Fire Services Commission for 2025/26 be approved;

- c) the continued affiliation with the North West Employers Organisation and who the representatives appointed to the North West Local Authorities Employers Organisation for 2025/26 be approved;
- d) the continued affiliation with the North West Fire and Rescue Advisory Forum be approved and the membership to represent the Authority be approved;
- e) the continued affiliation with the Association of the Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Authorities be approved and the membership to represent the Authority be approved; and
- f) the continued affiliation with the Growth Platform be approved and the representatives appointed on behalf of the Authority be approved.

11. Approved Conference and Outside Meetings

The Chair presented the report which related to Members attending conferences and outside meetings.

Councillor Kieran Murphy queried whether any training could be delivered online via Teams. Monitoring Officer, Ria Groves explained that the team looked to deliver some training remotely throughout the year where possible, which included learning lunches. Councillor Les Byrom added that the Local Government Association and North West Employers also offered training online.

It was noted by Councillor Edna Finneran that she had previously attended an external course and encouraged Members to take the opportunity to gain further knowledge.

RESOLVED that the attendance at conference and outside meetings by representatives of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority to be determined by the Chair of the Authority be approved.

12. Meetings with National Politicians at Party Conference

The Chair presented the report, noting that the facility to meet with national politicians at party conferences had been in place for a number of years.

RESOLVED that:

- a) appropriate representatives of the political groups of the Authority to attend meetings with Ministers, Opposition Spokespersons and other relevant national politicians, to be at the location of their own party-political conferences, to discuss issues relating to the business of the Authority be approved;
- b) appropriate travel and subsistence expenses for such meetings, but no payment of conference fees be made be approved; and

- c) issues raised, responses and progress on information received be reported back to the Authority.

13. Members Allowance Payments 24/25

Members were presented with the allowance payments for the previous financial year (2024-25).

RESOLVED that the information contained within the report and at Appendix A be noted.

14. Scheme of Allowance 25/26

The Chair presented the proposed Scheme of Allowances for 2025/26 with the proposed allowances being detailed in Appendix A.

RESOLVED that:

- a) Members' Allowances Scheme 2025/26 be approved, or:
- b) any variations to the Scheme they may wish to implement, in line with the structure of the Authority (which is being considered as a separate report on this agenda) and the approved budget be identified;
- c) any inflationary increase to the Authority's Scheme of Members' Allowances is normally aligned to the previous year's Firefighter's pay and subsistence allowances by the previous year's March CPI be noted;
- d) a pay increase to the Scheme of Members' Allowances in line with the Firefighters Pay Award for 2024/25 which would apply to the 2025/26 allowances be approved;
- e) the role of the Co-opted Member (subject to approval of the structure) to be paid for conducting such role following submission and verification of invoices at a daily attendance rate of £60 (as and when required) as is the current case be approved; and
- f) the payment of a daily rate of £60 (as and when required) for the appointed Independent Person be approved.

15. MFRA Constitution 25/26

Monitoring Officer, Ria Groves, presented the report which outlined the proposed changes to the Constitution for 2025/26. The majority of changes related to amending typographical errors. It was noted that the Contract Standing Orders had been recently amended due to changes in the legislation and the introduction of the Procurement Act 2023, however, additional amendments had been made to provide further clarity on the requirements for the provision of purchase orders, in particular, those relating to utilities within those Contract Standing Orders.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the draft amended Constitution for 2025/26 be approved;
- b) the Monitoring Officer to the Authority be instructed to keep the constitution under review; and
- c) in the event of any relevant changes in legislation, a further report be brought back to the Authority.

16. Contract for the Procurement of Electronic Personal Dosimeters (EPD)

Chief Fire Officer, Nick Searle, presented the report informing Members of the requirement to procure Electronic Personal Dosimeters (EPDs) for the National Resilience (NR) Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Capability.

Members were made aware that the Authority was the lead authority for UK National Resilience and the replacement of EPDs formed part of the New Dimensions 2 Project. It was noted that EPDs were worn by individuals to monitor their exposure to ionizing radiation and provide real-time information on the potential radiation dose.

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that the West Midlands Ambulance Framework agreement operated with a sole supplier agreement exclusively for EPDs and that was Thermo Fisher. It was explained that the framework was the same framework used when the DIM Capability refreshed their EPDs in 2022. The route to market was compliant with the Authority's Contract Standing Orders.

It was acknowledged that the funding for the EPDs was part of a grant provided from Home Office. This grant was paid specifically for National Resilience equipment and did not come from Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority funding.

RESOLVED that the award of the contract to Thermo Fisher for the procurement of EPDs from the West Midlands Ambulance Framework for £356,849 be approved.

17. Procurement of 12 B Type Fire Appliances

Chief Fire Officer, Nick Searle, introduced the report, explaining that the purpose of the report was to request approval of the procurement of B Type Fire Appliances as part of the Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP) five-year capital replacement programme.

The Chief Fire Officer explained that it had been decided to access a legally compliant framework comprising of pre-vetted and capable suppliers. Members were advised that the framework identified as being the most suitable was the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) framework agreement for Emergency

Response Vehicles concluded by Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service.

An open day was hosted at the Authority Workshops to allow suppliers to view proposed layout configurations of one of the newest appliances in the fleet.

The Chief Fire Officer explained that the outcome of the procurement exercise identified Emergency One Ltd as the preferred supplier.

Members noted that due to the inflationary price increases in recent years, there was a deficit of £1.175m in the current capital replacement programme and a realignment of the current capital programme was recommended to cover the deficit.

Chief Fire Officer, Nick Searle, mentioned that there was £0.900m budget for the procurement of a fully electric fire appliance in 2026/27, however, the technology around this was in its infancy, therefore it would be prudent for the Authority to monitor the sector and react at a time when the technology was more proven.

It was therefore recommended that the purchase of an electric fire appliance be delayed beyond the current five-year capital programme, and to use the current £0.900m budget to contribute towards the purchase of the non-electric appliances. The Chief Fire Officer reassured Members that there would be no requirement to increase the capital budget for the period of appliance purchases from 2025/26 – 2027/28.

Head of Procurement, Hywyn Pritchard, advised Members that the team had used the framework agreement from Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority who had completed research on the manufacturers available.

Councillor Grahame McManus enquired whether it would be possible to buy more fire appliances than currently needed and store the extras for future as costs would likely increase in the future. The Chief Fire Officer explained that the world of firefighting moved quick and in the next few years there could be changes to requirements. He explained that the Authority historically worked on a year-by-year purchase basis therefore working to three years was a step in the right direction. It was noted that after the three years, the requirements would be readdressed to consider any changes and environmental considerations moving forwards. Members were also advised that funding for the organisation could not be guaranteed to stay the same in the future and if there was a drastic change to the budget, there could be the need to readdress the number of appliances whether that be positive or negative.

It was queried by Councillor Kieran Murphy when it was likely that the new appliances would arrive at the respective Fire Stations. Hywyn Pritchard explained that once the order had been placed, the chassis would be expected to be obtained in 4-6 months which was when work would begin on the body building. This would take 3-6 months, meaning that the Authority looked at a 9-12 month period before seeing them on the run. Hywyn added that he would like to see these appliances on the run at the beginning of 2026.

The Chair of the Authority explained that technology was always changing and noted the importance of the Authority building the fire appliances to their own specifications to ensure that all fire appliances were similar, and staff knew the geography around fire appliances.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the realignment of Capital budget and the increase of £0.300m to accommodate the increased costs of appliances due to global financial factors in recent years be approved; and
- b) the award of contract to Emergency One Ltd for up to £4,500,344 for the purchase of 12 B Type Fire Appliances be approved.

Close

Date of next meeting Thursday, 23 October 2025