

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 APRIL 2026

MINUTES

Present: **Councillors** Dave Hanratty (Chair), Sam Gorst, Andrew Makinson, Kieran Murphy, Heather Westhead and Chris Page (Substitute)

Also Present:	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Ged Sheridan
	Head of Finance	James Campbell
	Monitoring Officer	Ria Groves

13. Appointment of Chair

In the absence of Councillor Edna Finneran, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee Monitoring Officer, Ria Groves, asked for a nomination for Chair for today's meeting. Councillor Heather Westhead nominated Councillor Dave Hanratty, which was seconded by Councillor Sam Gorst. This was agreed by all.

14. Apologies

Apologies received from Councillors Edna Finneran, Jeanette Banks, Doreen Knight, Mike Sullivan and Co-opted Member Mr Anthony Boyle. Councillor Chris Page attended as a substitute.

15. Declarations of Interest

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

16. Minutes of the Last Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 18th September 2025 be approved as an accurate record.

17. Response Key Performance Indicators

Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Ged Sheridan, advised Members that at the Policy & Resources Committee on 12th December 2024, the Service Delivery Plan Update report for July to September 2024-2025 was presented for review. During the meeting, several of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) excellent performance were noted by Members, particularly KPI TR08 which related to appliance standards, and the first attendance of appliances at all life risk incidents in 10 minutes. Members had enquired about attendance standards, noting the impressive 96.4% response standard within 10 minutes, however, it was suggested that further scrutiny take place around those that fell below the

average. This was therefore included in the scope of the Scrutiny Committee's Scrutiny Forward Work Plan.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer welcomed Group Manager for Operational Response, Neil Mooney, to take Members through a detailed presentation outlining the progress the Service had made to date in monitoring and improving operational standards.

Group Manager Neil Mooney advised Members that he overlooked the performance of 21 Fire Stations and the KPIs relating to responding to incidents and duties within the community.

Neil advised that there were two KPIs within Fire Control which was the percentage of 999 calls answered in under 10 seconds (DR22) and the average time taken to process a life risk call by Fire Control (DR29) which was the first crucial step in effective response. DR22 had a target of 96% which the Service had exceeded from 2020 to present day, with the last year being 97.4%. Whilst DR29 did not have a target set, it was about monitoring this. This was because the Service's aim was not to have a target to end calls within a set time or quickly. For example, Fire Control could be giving lifesaving guidance and advice over the phone which could lead to a 10-minute phone call. This KPI was an indicator to look for trends and which incident types generated a longer call time.

Last year Fire Control took between 125,000 – 130,000 calls of which 23,103 were emergency calls. It was explained that the non-emergency calls were administration calls, calls from other blue light partners and managing national assets that the Service had through National Resilience. Neil advised that Fire Control staff not only dealt with emergency calls, but gave fire survival guidance, helped people in stressful situations, created incident logs, mobilised appliances and assets to incidents and monitored radio traffic from other ongoing incidents. Members noted that a lot of work was produced from one phone call, and often there were duplicate calls for the same incident.

The Service measured the response from when appliances were alerted of an incident by Fire Control to how quickly the appliance was on the way to the incident with blue lights (DR23). Whilst Fire Control were still on the 999 calls, they alerted the appliances and created the incident log to get appliances mobilised. The target for this KPI was 1.9 minutes which equated to 1 minute and 54 seconds. Within this time, the crew needed to receive the information, get into PPE and get into the appliance. Neil advised that crews were not always on station – they could be out on training or out in the community. Members noted that this KPI had a pass of 95% to every incident attended, not just life risk incidents.

Neil explained that KPI DR23 was performance managed, and he took Members through the figures from 2020 to present day. It was advised that the Service had been mobilised 90,000 times since 2020. The average percentage over 5 years was 95.4% which was over target and last year was 95.7% meaning that the target continued to be met.

For any incidents that did not meet the target, the team would look into the reasons why. Some of these reasons could be due to crews training on stations, putting ladders back onto the appliances, human error and issues with technology. Neil reassured Members that the team were always looking at how these errors could be improved for the future.

It was acknowledged that the Service was investing in advanced technology to assist with alert to mobile and this was in its testing phase of enhanced mobilisation which was a form of pre-alert. Members noted that this should come into effect in the coming year. This new technology worked off the caller's location meaning that as soon as a 999 call was received, an alert would be sent to the nearest station and response times should be even quicker.

The next KPI Neil focused on was TR08 which measured the time from when an appliance was alerted to when it arrived at the scene of an incident. The target for the first appliance to be in attendance was 10 minutes and the aim was to meet this at a minimum of 90% for all life risk incidents in Merseyside. It was noted that life risk incidents were incidents such as a house or flat fire, high rise, buildings insurable loss, Road Traffic Collisions (RTC), chemical incidents, special service calls and water or mud rescue.

As all services set their own standards for this, it was difficult to benchmark against other services. Neil explained that some services adopted a low, medium and high risk for their service, however, the Authority moved away from this many years ago to a response standard and offered the same response time to all areas within Merseyside.

Members noted that the recent HMI report stated that the Authority was outstanding at responding to major incidents and Neil advised Members that this was due to the cover provided across the duty systems.

Neil reassured Members that the Service did not aim to take 10 minutes to respond to incidents and advised that in reality it was much quicker, however, that was the minimum standard.

It was noted that the Service had 10 key stations which were pre-planned. This meant that as long as there was a fire appliance within the vicinity of a key station, the Service could meet the majority of Merseyside by mapping isochrones around those key areas to meet a response time in 10 minutes.

MHCLG provided statistics on fire incidents and response times to fires only, however, the Authority's response standard was to all life risk incidents. It was advised that the average time taken to arrive at a fire in the home was 8 minutes, major cities was 7 minutes 24 seconds, and the Authority was 7 minutes 6 seconds. Neil looked at statistics for 2025-26 which sat at 6 minutes 58 seconds to a house fire in Merseyside. He reiterated that he hoped this would get quicker with enhanced technology and continual improvement.

Neil advised Members that last year's statistic showed that the Service met 96% of this KPI. Members were reassured that the team continued to look at that

data and the 4% where this was not met to make improvements for the future. Neil confirmed that for 2025-26, the statistic was 96.8%.

For times where the Service did not meet the standard, Operational Assurance held meetings every Monday, Wednesday and Friday to analyse performance, quality assure the data, look for trends and anomalies and ways to make the Service better. A number of trends had been identified such as the time of day including rush hour traffic, human error, donning of water rescue PPE, the incident being outside of the 10-minute isochrone, and multiple incidents ongoing at the same time.

Neil explained that the team was carrying out an emergency cover review including looking at KPIs, response models and key stations to see whether anything could be done differently and whether any changes needed to be made. This would shape the next Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

When looking at accidental dwelling fires, the Service aimed to confine the fire to the room where it started and the target for this was 92%. Over the last 10 years, this figure was consistently between 97-98%. This KPI aimed to show how effective home fire safety advice was delivered and received in communities, to show correlation in fire development and response times and to enhance firefighting tactics to save life and prevent the spread of fire.

Neil explained that the Service would continue to quality assure incidents to identify trends, keep on track with advanced technology and continue to look at what other Fire and Rescue Services were doing to see if there were any learning opportunities from this.

Councillor Sam Gorst drew Members' attention to the figures on the life risk incidents and other incidents. During the years 2019 – 2021, he noted that incidents dropped significantly and wondered if Covid impacted this. Neil agreed that this was a factor with not as many people being outdoors and there were also not as many secondary fires within those years with a quieter bonfire period and a reduction in road traffic collisions.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Ged Sheridan added that generally life risk incidents were decreasing whilst other types of incidents such as supporting other agencies and non-life risk incidents were increasing. There had been a decrease in dwelling fires and whilst Ged agreed that this decreased in Covid, he noted that there was a noticeable decrease in general. He added that during Covid, there was an increase in outdoor living such as shed conversions and outdoor office spaces being built which was noticed via HFSCs and the types of fires attended. It was advised that the Service adapted prevention tactics following these emerging trends to be able to tailor advice to this.

Councillor Andrew Makinson thanked Neil for the very comprehensive report and queried whether the 3-4% of response times that fell outside of the 10-minute standard were just outside of this or whether this was anything to worry about. Neil advised that these were just outside of the 10 minutes, usually around 11-12 minutes. This could be due to difficulties in finding motorway incidents and limited information provided by the 999 caller. The Assistant Chief

Fire Officer added that there were occasions when the public gave an incorrect address which had affected figures, so technology was being looked at such as 'what3words' and alert to mobile as this was something the Service could control.

Councillor Chris Page expressed how impressed and reassured he was with the dynamic and constant review that the Service undertook. When looking at improving the small percentage of times the Service did not meet the standard, Chris noted that this relied on information regarding what went wrong, and he hoped that this was an open conversation rather than an individual being criticised. Neil reassured Members that this was a constructive piece of learning to aim to improve and respond better and that it was not to single anybody out.

It was praised by Councillor Dave Hanratty how fantastic the Service's response times had been for a number of years and noted the difficulty in benchmarking against other Fire and Rescue Services. He advised that this was something to be extremely proud of and was reassured to hear that the Service continually pushed themselves to be better which showed great determination.

An issue that Councillor Dave Hanratty raised was post codes of new build houses not being up to date on satellite navigation devices which could cause a problem in locating an incident. Neil confirmed that when new build plans were put in place, the Operational Intelligence team would be made aware of this and a UPR number would be assigned to it and put into the Service's mapping straight away. Councillor Sam Gorst queried at what point the Service was notified of new builds and asked who notified them. Neil advised that the team was notified at the planning phase, along with updates at various stages throughout the process and they worked with the Local Authority.

Councillor Dave Hanratty raised concerns around the roads surrounding Everton's Football Stadium being grid locked on match days and wanted to ensure that there were appropriate methods in place in case of emergencies on match days. Neil reassured Members that a match day control officer attended every Liverpool and Everton home game and there was an alerting area in place to notify them of any incidents in the area. The match day control officer would then work with stewards, police and fire control to act on this emergency procedure.

Councillor Dave Hanratty mentioned that the response time figures were on the first appliance, however, he asked for clarification that the second or third appliance response time was still as good as the first and this was confirmed as true. Neil advised that the second appliance would usually be around the same time or a couple of minutes behind the first appliance, however this was something that the team was looking at during the emergency cover review.

RESOLVED that;

- a) the contents of the report and accompanying presentation detailing the Key Performance Indicator used to measure Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service' ('MFRS') attendance standard response be noted; and

- a) the performance by MFRS as detailed within the accompanying presentation against the KPI adopted be scrutinised.

18. Scrutiny Forward Work Plan 2025-2026

Monitoring Officer, Ria Groves, advised that Members were familiar that the Scrutiny Forward Work Plan was a standard item brought to Members to update them on the progress in 2025-2026 and a copy was contained in Appendix A.

Members noted that all items, with one exception, had been presented throughout the municipal year. Ria advised that the remaining item was 'Management of Contaminants' which was provisionally to be presented at this meeting, however, she was made aware that further works were being undertaken regarding contaminants including an inspection by the Health & Safety Executive. Therefore, the team thought it would be more prudent to bring this item to the next Scrutiny Committee to feedback on the outcome of the inspection which would be in the following municipal year of 2026-27.

Councillor Kieran Murphy asked when the next Scrutiny Committee would take place. Ria advised that the dates for the next municipal year would be confirmed at the Annual General Meeting (AGM), although it was likely to be at the end of July.

Monitoring Officer, Ria Groves, added that Scrutiny Workshops had been held after the AGM for Members of the Scrutiny Committee where they would meet with the Assistant Chief Fire Officer to put forward if there were any areas that Members wanted to scrutinise as part of the new Scrutiny Forward Work Plan.

RESOLVED that;

- a) the progress of the Scrutiny Forward Work Plan 2025/26 to date be noted; and
- b) the recommendation that the remaining scrutiny item on the Scrutiny Forward Work Plan 2025/26 be carried forward to the next Scrutiny Forward Work Plan for 2026/27 be approved.

Close

The date of next meeting will be after the Annual General Meeting.

Dated: _____

Signed: _____