

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PROTECTION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	3 SEPTEMBER 2026	REPORT NO:	CFO/04/2627
PRESENTING OFFICER	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, NICK SEARLE		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE, DEB APPLETON	REPORT AUTHOR:	STATION MANAGER DEVELOPMENT, PAUL MITCHELSON
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TEAM (SLT)		
TITLE OF REPORT:	NATIONAL FIRE STANDARDS ANNUAL REPORT		
APPENDICES:	APPENDIX A: NATIONAL FIRE STANDARDS ANNUAL UPDATE 2025/26		

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Members of progress towards compliance with the National Fire Standards.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that Members:
 - a) note the progress against achieving compliance with the National Fire Standards (Appendix A); and
 - b) note the work being undertaken within Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS).

Introduction and Background

3. The national Fire Standards Board (FSB) has been set up to oversee the identification, organisation, development and maintenance of professional standards for the fire and rescue services in England.
4. It seeks to ensure that any Fire Standards presented for approval have:
 - been developed in line with the agreed development process;
 - undergone appropriate consultation with subject matter experts and relevant stakeholders; and,
 - undergone an independent quality assurance process.

Scope of Fire Standards

1. To help categorise the areas requiring Fire Standards and the guidance that is likely to underpin them, an Activity Framework has been developed by the FSB. This enables the Board to capture all the activities performed by fire and rescue services irrespective of their governance model, budget or location and who provides those functions (for example, services that are part of a local authority).
2. The principles of this approach are founded on the experience gained through the National Operational Guidance Programme (NOGP). The Activity Framework is intended to:
 - provide a complete road map so it is clear where the NFCC and FSB are going;
 - help avoid duplication and overlap which may result in conflicting guidance if developed in isolation; and,
 - be easy to navigate for all audiences.

Fire Standards Development

3. The National Fire Chiefs Council, through its Central Programme Office (CPO) provides administrative and policy support to the Fire Standards Board.
4. The Board and CPO work together to develop the suite of professional Standards. They will follow a commonly recognised process originating from the British Standards Institute and used in many other sectors.

In this process, the Board is responsible for:

- creating and maintaining a framework of professional Fire Standards that are applicable to, or in use within, fire and rescue services in England;
- considering the existing fire and rescue landscape through findings of existing research, the fire reform programme, operational or organisational learning from past incidents and from HMICFRS inspection outputs;
- identifying gaps within the framework and identifying priorities for new or revised professional Fire Standards;
- working with the NFCC to plan and align Fire Standards development work with the strategic commitments and their existing programmes;
- reviewing proposals and commissioning work;
- ensuring published Fire Standards remain current and fit for purpose through both benefits' realisation and periodic review;
- commissioning work to review and revise published Fire Standards as and when required; and
- building and maintaining relationships with partners across fire and rescue services, including those in the Devolved Administrations to inform the work they commission and approve.

The CPO is responsible for:

- preparing proposals for Fire Standards development work;
- facilitating development work when commissioned;
- managing the periodic review cycles of approved Fire Standards;
- monitoring and informing the Board where a Fire Standard may need revision outside of agreed cycles; and
- monitoring benefits realisation and periodic reporting to the Board.

Approved Fire Standards

5. To date the Fire Standards Board have written, consulted on and published the following Nineteen Standards:

- Code of Ethics
- Communication, Engagement and Consultation
- Community Risk Management Planning
- Data Management
- Digital and Cyber
- Emergency Preparedness and Resilience
- Emergency Response Driving
- Fire Control
- Fire Investigation
- Internal Governance and Assurance
- Leading and Developing People
- Leading the Fire Service
- Operational Competence
- Operational Learning
- Operational Preparedness
- Prevention
- Procurement and Commercial
- Protection
- Safeguarding

The Fire Standards Board are reviewing Fire Standards that have been published for 3 or more years, the following standards are currently under review, which includes consultation. MFRS contributes to that consultation process for each Fire Standard.

1. Communication, Engagement and Consultation.
2. Emergency Preparedness and Resilience.
3. Fire Control.
4. Leading the Fire Service.
5. Leading and Developing People.
6. Operational Learning.

The FSB has one live consultation at the date of writing this report and it is due to close on 07/09/2026. This is the Emergency Preparedness and Resilience standard.

The MFRS process for implementing Standards

6. When a new or revised Fire Standard is released, it is added to the dedicated intranet Portal page and relevant officers are alerted. Officers then use an FSB implementation toolkit to consider the extent to which MFRS is compliant. A recent update to the Fire Standards toolkit has been introduced by the FSB which includes the addition of three lines of assurance for each new or revised standards. These toolkits are used by MFRS to track compliance and the dashboards from the toolkits have been used within the appendix to this report.
7. Responsibility is allocated to relevant functions to complete the NFCC gap analysis toolkit on the Portal and regularly update it for each Fire Standard. Actions arising from the implementation of Fire Standards should be incorporated into existing plans or managed as business as usual, whichever is most appropriate and managed through the Board structure.
8. This full progress report will be submitted to the Authority annually and the progress for 2025/26 can be found in the appendix to this report.

Equality and Diversity Implications

9. Equality and Diversity actions form part of the work of the National Fire Standards Board and the work undertaken to implement each Fire Standard is equally impact assessed as appropriate.

Staff Implications

10. There are no direct staffing implications contained within this report.

Legal Implications

11. The Standards allow greater scrutiny and alignment across the sector mitigating the risk to the Authority when carrying out its activities and service to the community.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

12. The National Fire Standards should provide the same or an improved level of service for the same or a reduced cost.
13. Actions required to ensure compliance that have cost implications should be maintained within existing budgets.

Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications

14. Consideration of Health and Safety and successful risk management is paramount in complying with the National Fire Standards.

Environmental Implications

15. Consideration of the environment is part of complying with National Fire Standards

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.*

16. Compliance with the National Fire Standards will assure the Authority and the people we serve on Merseyside that we are providing the best possible service.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

CFO/25/24 National Fire Standards Annual Update April 2024

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

NONE