MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	**AUTHORITY**		
DATE:	**24TH MAY 2018**	**REPORT NO:**	**CFO/031/18**
PRESENTING OFFICER	**MONITORING OFFICER**		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	**MONITORING OFFICER**	**REPORT AUTHOR:**	**KELLY KELLAWAY – DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER, EXTN 4113**
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	**AUTHORITY LEAD MEMBERS LEAD MEMBER SUPPORT OFFICERS CHAIR OF AUDIT & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE INDEPENDENT PERSON CHAIR OF THE AUTHORITY VICE-CHAIR OF THE AUTHORITY**		
TITLE OF REPORT:	**MFRA LEAD MEMBER AND SCRUTINY REVIEW OUTCOMES AND OPTIONS**		

APPENDICES:	

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Members of the key outcomes of a review of Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority's (MFRA) Lead Member and Scrutiny processes.

2. To request that Members consider the outcomes of the review and the proposed options for strengthening MFRA's scrutiny arrangements.

Recommendation

3. That Members;

   a. Consider the key outcomes of a review of MFRA's current Lead Member and Scrutiny processes.

   b. Approve the various proposals contained within this report outlined at paragraph 20, for strengthening MFRA's scrutiny arrangements.

   c. Consider the revised Committee Structure options outlined at Paragraph 23, identified to support improved scrutiny arrangements; and approve the recommended option to keep "Audit" and "Scrutiny" functions together under the remit of the same Committee, but make this a full Committee

comprising of 7 Members. (more detail on this option is outlined at Paragraphs 24 to 26).

d. Agree the preferred Committee Structure Option, for implementation following the Authority's Annual General Meeting on 14th June 2018.

Introduction and Background

4. As Members will be aware, the new Fire and Rescue National Framework came into effect in April 2018. Within the document, it states that FRA's must be accountable to communities for the service they provide; and

"In demonstrating their accountability to communities for the service they provide, FRA's need to: have scrutiny arrangements in place that reflect the high standard communities expect for an important public safety service".

5. At present, MFRA's scrutiny function falls within the Terms of Reference for the Audit & Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

6. MFRA has also appointed six "Lead Members" covering the areas of:

- Operational Response
- Operational Preparedness
- People & Organisational Development
- Strategy & Performance
- Strategic Change & Resources
- Community Risk Management (including reference for Children and Young People)

Plus a "Member Ambassador" role for Health & Wellbeing.

7. Previously, MFRA's scrutiny function was distinct from its Audit function, with a separate Performance & Scrutiny Committee established. At this time, membership of the Performance & Scrutiny Committee consisted of the Lead Members, plus a Chair of the Committee.

8. The Committee also had a Forward Work Plan, which included items for scrutiny and review under the remit of each of the Lead Members. This approach provided structure and purpose to MFRA's scrutiny work and Lead Members roles; and enabled the Lead Members involved in scrutiny reviews to feedback to the Performance & Scrutiny Committee, when their items were considered.

9. In June 2016, the Performance & Scrutiny Committee was disbanded; and MFRA's scrutiny functions were merged with its Audit functions, under the remit of the Audit & Scrutiny Sub-Committee. As the membership of this Sub-Committee comprises of only 5 Members (plus the Independent Person in a non-voting capacity), the Lead Members are no longer all appointed to one designated Committee responsible for scrutiny.

10. In addition, there were only three meetings of the Audit & Scrutiny Sub-Committee scheduled for the Municipal Year 2017/18, which did not enable effective, regular scrutiny to occur. This led to regular performance and update reports, previously considered by the Performance & Scrutiny Committee, having to be submitted to various Committees of the Authority, depending on reporting timescales.

11. Since the cessation of the Performance & Scrutiny Committee, there has been a disconnect between the Lead Member process and MFRA's scrutiny functions, with no clear process for Lead Members to feed into scrutiny.

12. It has also been apparent that there is no overall consistency between the Lead Members roles, with each operating in a different way, with differing levels of involvement and engagement; and no clear purpose.

13. With the impending introduction of the new Fire and Rescue National Framework, it was apparent that a review of MFRA's current scrutiny arrangements was timely, in order to identify options to improve the effectiveness and relevance of the role of the Lead Members; and MFRA's scrutiny functions generally.

Consultation

14. As part of this review, a range of stakeholders were consulted, including:

- Lead Members
- Lead Member Support Officers
- Independent Person
- Chair of the Audit & Scrutiny Sub-Committee
- Chair and Vice-Chair of the Authority

15. All individuals consulted were asked to provide feedback on how they feel the current Lead Member and Scrutiny arrangements have been working; and to make suggestions as to how they could be improved moving forward.

16. Following this consultation, in terms of feedback regarding current arrangements, some common themes emerged as follows:

- The current scrutiny and Lead Member arrangements could and should be improved, particularly in light of the new Fire and Rescue National Framework and the new inspectorate regime.
- At present, scrutiny lacks structure.
- There are not enough meetings of the Audit & Scrutiny Sub-Committee scheduled, to enable effective scrutiny to occur, nor are the meetings scheduled to enable regular update and performance reports to be considered by the one committee responsible for scrutiny.
- There is no clear definition or expectations for the Lead Member Roles.
- The current Committee Structure and meeting timetable hinders effective scrutiny.

- There is no mechanism for Lead Members to feed into the scrutiny process.

17. With regards to suggested improvements, again, some common ideas emerged, including:

    - Re-introducing a Forward Work Plan for any committee with responsibility for scrutiny, devised by Members; and containing scrutiny items linked to the IRMP.
    - Improving the knowledge of the whole Authority around the IRMP.
    - The creation of more structured Scrutiny, driven by Members.
    - The creation of a "Role Map" for Lead Members to provide a clear definition of the role and expectations.
    - Amending the MFRA Committee Structure and meeting timetable to create a more structured, regular meeting schedule, to support improved scrutiny.
    - Having generic "Scrutiny Member" roles, as opposed to specified Lead Member Roles.
    - Having all Scrutiny Members meeting together in some forum, to ensure consistency of roles.
    - Having some form of "panel approach" involving Scrutiny Members and relevant support officers, which links into a committee responsible for scrutiny functions.
    - Consideration of the involvement of partners/ key stakeholders in any scrutiny process, to ensure effectiveness of joint working arrangements.

18. Throughout the review, it was acknowledged that there will be an increased need to ensure that MFRA can demonstrate the impact and value that the Scrutiny Members add; and that Scrutiny Members should be able to clearly demonstrate that they have assured themselves that the information they have been provided with is relevant and accurate.

General Proposals

19. Following the consultation, the feedback was collated and reviewed by the Monitoring Officer and Democratic Services Manager, with a view to identifying options for improving and strengthening scrutiny arrangements.

20. Subsequently, the following improvements were identified:

    - The IRMP should be considered as MFRA's overall Forward Plan.
    - All Authority Members be provided with input from each Directorate, on an overview of the Department and detailed overview of its IRMP actions. This would improve Members' knowledge and understanding of key projects and work streams and enable Members to identify relevant and appropriate topics/ items for scrutiny.

    - Once items for scrutiny have been identified, these could then form the basis of a Forward Work Plan for the relevant scrutiny committee. The

appropriate Officers would be consulted during the formulation of the Forward Work Plan, to ensure that items selected are reasonable and are scheduled for reporting at appropriate times.

- To create a number of generic "Scrutiny Member" roles, rather than specific "Lead Member" roles. These "Scrutiny Members" should be appointed to the relevant scrutiny committee and a selection of those Members would participate in each scrutiny review, alongside the relevant officers.

- Outcomes of the scrutiny reviews would then be reported back to the relevant scrutiny committee, where those "Scrutiny Members" who participated in the review could provide feedback and respond to questions raised, assisted by Officers, clearly demonstrating their involvement in the scrutiny process.

- Consideration should be given to establishing a Committee Structure and regular meeting schedule that supports improved scrutiny (several options for which have been detailed below).

- Consideration should also be given to involving representatives from partner organisations in scrutiny. For example for collaborative work streams, Officers from MFRA and our partners could be requested to provide a joint update presentation to the relevant scrutiny committee, where Members can ask questions and assure themselves that collaborative working is operating efficiently and effectively.

21. In order for scrutiny to be effective and enable the Authority to "*have scrutiny arrangements in place that reflect the high standard communities expect for an important public safety service"*, it is evident that there will need to be a greater focus on scrutiny.

22. The proposals detailed above, would enable Officer and Members time to be utilised more efficiently and effectively than at present, by the undertaking of specific scrutiny reviews that will add value and provide assurance.

Committee Structure Options and Costs

23. The current Committee Structure costs £197,719.00 (not including on costs) and in terms of proposed amendments to the Committee Structure and meeting schedule, to facilitate improved scrutiny, several options where identified; and considered by the Strategic Management Group.

Option 1

<u>To establish two separate Sub-Committees, both consisting of 5 Members. One with responsibility for "Audit" functions; and one with responsibility for "Scrutiny" functions.</u>

This option would create an additional "Sub-Committee Chair" payment, but would reduce the number of "Scrutiny Member" roles from 7 to 4.

This option would create a saving of £2,018 p.a.

Strengths

- Distinction between "audit" and "scrutiny" functions, enabling more focus on scrutiny.
- Creates a saving

Weaknesses

- Would remain a Sub-Committee not reporting directly into the full Authority (which is considered best practice)
- Would not necessarily raise the profile of scrutiny within the Authority.
- Fewer "Scrutiny Members" to draw upon for scrutiny reviews. This could have an impact in terms of reduced knowledge, skills, experience and availability.

Option 2

As Option 1, but with the "Scrutiny" functions under the remit of a full Scrutiny Committee comprising of 7 Members (as opposed to Sub-Committee with only 5 Members)

This option would create an additional "Committee Chair" role and 6 "Scrutiny Member" roles.

The "Audit" functions would remain within the remit of an Audit Sub-Committee, as per current arrangements.

This option would create an increase in Member Allowance Payments of £6,053 p.a

Strengths:

- Follows best practice, with a Scrutiny Committee reporting directly to the full Authority.
- Creates a distinction between "Scrutiny" functions and "Audit" functions".
- Raises the profile of scrutiny within the Authority.

- More “Scrutiny Members” to draw upon for scrutiny reviews, with more knowledge, skills, experience and availability.

Weaknesses:

- Creates an additional cost of £6,053 p.a

Option 3

To keep “Audit” and “Scrutiny” functions together under the remit of the same Committee, but make this a full Committee comprising of 7 Members.

This option creates an additional “Committee Chair” role, but removes a “Sub-Committee Chair” role; with 6 “Scrutiny Member” roles.

This option would be cost neutral.

Strengths:

- Follows best practice, with a Scrutiny Committee reporting directly to the full Authority.
- Raises the profile of scrutiny within the Authority.
- More “Scrutiny Members” to draw upon for scrutiny reviews, with more knowledge, skills, experience and availability.

Weaknesses:

- Does not create any savings (although it is cost neutral).
- Would still not be a distinction between the “audit” and “scrutiny” functions.

Option 4

To retain the existing structure, with an Audit & Scrutiny Sub-Committee consisting of 5 Members (including a Sub-Committee Chair).

This would result in a Sub-Committee Chair role (as present), with 4 “Scrutiny Member” roles.

This option would create a saving of £6,054 p.a

Strengths:

- Creates the most savings.

Weaknesses:

- Would remain a Sub-Committee not reporting directly into the full Authority (which is considered best practice)
- Would not raise the profile of scrutiny within the Authority.
- Fewer "Scrutiny Members" to draw upon for scrutiny reviews. This could have an impact in terms of reduced knowledge, skills, experience and availability.

24. Officers have considered each of the options outlined above; and consider Option 3 to be of the most benefit to the Authority, in terms of facilitating improved scrutiny.

25. The recommendation of Officers, is that Members adopt Option 3, and agree to an increase in the number of meetings of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee, to enable regularly, effective scrutiny to occur.

26. It is also recommended that the Agenda's for these meetings are separated into Part A - "Audit Items" and Part B – "Scrutiny Items", to create a distinction between the two functions.

Equality and Diversity Implications

27. There are no direct equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

Staff Implications

28. The proposals contained within this report, are intended to ensure that the time of Members and Officers is used to best effect, in a manner which will add value and ensure greater accountability.

Legal Implications

29. Although fire and rescue authorities are not required by law to establish specific scrutiny committees, the new Fire and Rescue National Framework, which came into effect in April 2018, states that FRA's must be accountable to communities for the service they provide; and

"In demonstrating their accountability to communities for the service they provide, FRA's need to: have scrutiny arrangements in place that reflect the high standard communities expect for an important public safety service".

Financial Implications & Value for Money

30. The financial implications and value for money considerations, have been detailed within the body of this report, but they will vary depending upon the Committee Structure option selected by MFRA.

31. With the exception of Option 2, the options proposed within this report are either cost neutral, or create a small saving; and will ensure that the Authority's scrutiny arrangements are more efficient and effective and represent value for money.

32. Although Option 2 creates a slight increase in Members Allowance payments of £6,053 p.a, this increase can be met from existing budgets, if Members consider this to be their preferred option.

33. Should Members approve Option 3 as recommended by Officers, there will be no financial implications, as this option is cost neutral.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

34. Although there are no direct risk management, health and safety, or environmental implications arising from this report, having robust, effective scrutiny arrangements in place, will ensure that the Authority is best placed to identify any potential implications should they arise.

Contribution to Our Mission: *Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Firefighters*

35. Having robust, effective scrutiny arrangements, will enable MFRA to assure itself that the services it provides continues to ensure "Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Firefighters".

BACKGROUND PAPERS

GLOSSARY OF TERMS