MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	**AUTHORITY**		
DATE:	**20 OCTOBER 2016**	**REPORT NO:**	**CFO/077/16**
PRESENTING OFFICER	**DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	**DEB APPLETON**	**REPORT AUTHOR:**	**WENDY KENYON**
OFFICERS CONSULTED:			
TITLE OF REPORT:	**RESULTS OF THE EMPLOYEES ENGAGEMENT SURVEY**		

APPENDICES:	**APPENDIX A:**	**SUMMARY OF STAFF RESPONSE RATES**
	APPENDIX B	**SUMMARY OF QUESTION RESPONSES**
	APPENDIX C	**EXTERNAL BENCHMARKING**

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Members of the results of the MFRA staff engagement survey 2016. *(The full set of reports can be found at www.merseyfire.gov.uk)*

Recommendation

2. That Members note the content of the report and give their support to the development of an engagement action plan, which will be generated in response to the priority areas identified within the report.

Introduction and Background

3. Understanding the levels of engagement amongst all employees and how those levels of engagement can be improved upon is important to the Authority. Members will be aware that the second staff engagement survey took place during June/July 2016 to ensure that engagement levels are monitored regularly and understood. People Insight Ltd were again commissioned to deliver the second staff survey on behalf of the Authority, using the same question sets as used in the 2014 survey.

4. This enabled MFRA to benchmark progress in relation to staff engagement against the results from 2014. An additional free text question was added to gauge staff's views on the changes they had experienced since the last survey.

5. The survey was delivered in a consistent manner, with People Insight hosting the Survey externally and managing the production and analysis of the results to

enable the Authority to maintain confidentiality and anonymity for those staff completing the survey.

6. The survey had the full support and approval of all representative bodies, the Strategic Management Group and the Authority.

Organisational Context

7. The Service is undergoing the most radical changes in its history, and whilst Officers understand that this can significantly influence the responses of some staff, it is vitally important that any organisation having to deliver such change doesn't avoid asking certain questions for fear of the answers. Officers are committed to continuing to engage with staff in order to continuously improve performance.

8. There is always the potential for some of the views expressed during the survey to be a direct reaction to some of the necessary changes that have taken place over the previous two years and that should be considered when reading the results of the survey.

9. In undertaking this survey the Authority sought to fully understand the impact that the changes have had on its employees and will use these findings to support the most effective delivery of organisational change.

10. The Authority recognises that engaged staff are the most productive employees.

Survey Methodology

11. The survey was open for a total of four weeks from 1st June to 4th July 2016 with regular communications targeted at all staff groups to encourage completion. These included using the Message of the Day on the Intranet Portal, Principal Officer staff briefings, the Hot News staff magazine and internal department and team communications. Posters were also used to encourage staff to complete their surveys. Every member of staff received a personal email with the staff survey link from People Insight and they were reminded every week to complete the survey.

12. The survey questions were designed to measure people's attitudes, beliefs and satisfaction levels against nine key employee engagement issues:

    - Goal Clarity
    - My Job
    - Employee Involvement
    - Teamwork
    - Learning and Development
    - Recognition and Reward
    - Management Effectiveness
    - Culture and Values
    - Change Management
    - Overall /MFRS

Reporting the outcomes

13. People Insight have delivered high level presentations to three core groups, those being:

    - **Strategic Management Group on 16th August 2016** – SMG are cascading their functional results during September/October to engage with staff further and identify key areas for improvement.

    - **Representative Bodies on 25th August 2016** - The outcomes of that meeting were positive and an endorsement was provided by all representative bodies with the FBU stating:

      "The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) are greatly encouraged by the results of the latest staff survey. These results acknowledge the ongoing hard work that the Service and the FBU jointly undertook in order to better engage with our staff and members. There is still a lot to be achieved but these results show that through hard work, meaningful dialogue and engagement that good industrial relations can be achieved and that we can continue to work together to achieve a better and fairer workplace where our members can be assured that their concerns are not only being listened to but that their concerns are also visibly being acted upon"

    - **Authority Members on 6th September 2016** – Where Members had the opportunity to discuss the key outcomes and be updated on the process of disseminating the results to staff.

14. The full set of staff survey reports was released to staff and Authority Members on 6th September.

Response rates and findings

15. The overall results of the survey have been very positive and indicate that the workforce is much more engaged than in 2014. This suggests that a focus on staff engagement and "Think People" has had a positive impact since 2014 and it is intended that that focus is continued, with identification of what engagement has been most effective currently underway. Lessons learned from this exercise will inform future engagement strategies.

16. The following paragraphs provide a summary of the results. Further analysis is provided in appendices to this report and the full set of results can be found at www.merseyfire.gov.uk.

17. The reports include analysis of all questions in the survey in relation to the five possible responses; strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree. Results for each question have been presented as a percentage that is a combination of strongly agree and agree or strongly disagree

and disagree. The reports use a colour code to enable easy prioritisation of each Engagement question and section:



An identified area of strength

An area for development or further investigation

An area of weakness

18. 518 staff completed the 2016 survey, which is a response rate of 51%. This is a reduction of 258 people and 17% percentage points compared to the previous staff survey carried out in 2014. For further information on the responses received by function and staff grouping please see appendix A.

19. Despite the reduction in response rate, People Insight have assured the Authority that the results are statistically valid and can be used to draw conclusions from across the whole organisation.

20. The most significant result is the increase in overall staff engagement from a score of 55% in 2014 to 74% in 2016.

21. This is the biggest increase People Insight has observed in such a short space of time. The 19 percentage point increase is deemed to be very significant and is often only seen in organisations using the staff engagement survey over a period of 5+ years. This is to be celebrated. Further details on the engagement levels amongst the staff groupings and functions of the organisation can be found at appendix B

22. Additional positive results have been recorded in relation the following :

Highlights from the top 10 results – most positive responses:

- *"I care about the future of MFRA" - 88%*
- *"I understand the need for change at MFRA given the cuts faced by the Authority" – 88%*
- *"I have the knowledge and skills I need to do my job well" – 86%*
- *"My manager treats people fairly and with respect" – 82%*
- *"I feel valued and recognised for the work I do by other team members" – 79%*
- *"I am proud to say I work for MFRA" – 78%*

Highlights from the greatest improvements:

- *"I do not feel I have been bullied, harassed or discriminated against in the last 12 months" – up 27 percentage points to 75%*
- *"MFRA is a better place to work than it was 3 years ago" – up 27 percentage points to 42%*

- *"Morale in my immediate team/watch/section is generally high" – up 26 percentage points to 58%*
- *"I enjoy my work" – up 25 percentage points to 76%*
- *"I feel supported in my role" – up 24 percentage points to 58%*
- *"Bullying, harassment and discrimination are not tolerated at MFRA" – up 22 percentage points to 67%*

Key theme from the bottom 10 results – i.e. fewest positive responses:
All the below fall within the category of Management Effectiveness:

- *"I have confidence in the future of MFRA" – 26%*
- *"MFRA members engage well with staff at MFRA" – 24%*
- *"Senior managers do what they say they are going to do" – 31%*

It should be noted that these areas also showed improvement from the 2014 survey, some significantly, but they remain in the bottom 10 results.

Only decline since 2014

- ***"**We are good are sharing ideas to make things work better" – reduction of 15 percentage points to 40%*

<u>Staff Engagement since 2014</u>

23. **Why might people have felt more engaged this time?**
Below are our engagement commitments from 2014 and what has been done to achieve them.

***Commitment 1**:* We will conduct a staff survey every two years to engage with staff on matters that are important to them and to the organisation. The survey will monitor progress with our Engagement Commitments and Principles.
- The second staff survey was completed in June

Commitment 2: We will continue to use staff forums and stakeholder meetings (including the four representative bodies) to focus on areas for change and development between the surveys and to gather feedback and views (e.g. Watch Manager forums and Female FF forum).
- Watch Manager forums held by the DCFO
- Female Firefighter Forums
- LGBT network and Allies scheme launched.

Commitment 3: We will increase the visibility and accessibility of the Authority Members, Principal Officers and Strategic Management Group through extending some existing practices and the introduction of new engagement activities.
- PO briefings to departments,
- Breakfast with the Chief,
- Elected Member engagement with support staff.

Commitment 4: We will value and recognise staff for the good work they do through non-financial recognition and reward which managers will be empowered to use. – This commitment has amongst other things resulted in staff being involved in research and development projects which have contributed to the way in which our services have been delivered and by staff attendance at Charity events and awards dinners as representatives of the Authority.

Commitment 5: Staff engagement will be an important part of the SMG agenda at every meeting; considerations for all proposals, policies, decisions and actions will involve thinking about the impact it has on our people and the engagement required before decisions are made.

- This has been incorporated into all SMG reports

Commitment 6: We will enable and support all managers across the organisation to engage effectively and confidently with their staff on a regular basis and to feed into decision making processes at all levels.

- Station and Watch Manager ownership of planning and performance management,
- Changes to the station work routine.

<u>High and low scores</u>

24. Appendix B highlights the ten questions that received the most positive responses from staff and the ten questions that received the most negative responses. It is particularly encouraging to see that the top ten results highlight that staff feel they have all the knowledge and skills to enable them to do their job, that staff care about the future of MFRA and that they also feel their manager treats them with respect. It is also encouraging to know that staff have a good understanding of why the organisation needs to make cuts, given the current financial situation faced by the Authority.

<u>External Benchmarking</u>

25. Benchmarking helps to put our staff survey results into context, by showing how our results compare with that of other organisations that have run staff surveys using the same questions. This comparison helps us to identify relative strengths and areas to improve.

26. The staff survey measured the extent to which staff are engaged with the organisation. People Insight compared MFRA's 2016 engagement score of 74% to its previous score of 55% and those of other organisations**.** The 2016 score is 19 percentage points higher than in MFRA's previous survey and is now only 3% lower than the average benchmark score of 77% for other (private and public) organisations who have used similar survey questions. Appendix C has more details on benchmarking.

<u>Next Steps</u>

27. In order to build on the areas staff felt positively about and take action to investigate and respond to those areas where engagement was lower, or where concerns were expressed by staff, managers are currently speaking to their teams to enhance the survey results. Initially, priority areas of the survey results have been identified by People Insight for consideration.

28. The priority areas are presented in the chart below as those areas that MFRA should celebrate and maintain (green), areas where there is a need for action (red) and areas that require further research and investigation to gather more information to help direct further improvement. Further work will be done to review these over the coming months with staff, managers and representative bodies, and proposals for future engagement will be developed.

Priority Areas and People Insight comments

Celebrate & Maintain	**Engagement Levels**	19% point increase in Engagement Index in two years. Great rises from 27% to 22% points in top 10. Improved statements. Only one area of decline this year.
Celebrate & Maintain	**Safer Stronger Communities**	Staff still enjoy the service to the public part of the role. Ensure positive stories are shared and make sure role of all staff in delivering service is understood by all.
Prioritise	**Response rate**	Why has it dropped by 17% points? In a survey showing excellent progress this is an anomaly that needs to be acknowledged.
Prioritise	**Appraisals**	Appraisals are a priority area for improvement. Will allow secondary improvement areas to be addressed: feeling valued, confidence in future, not tolerating bullying or discrimination. Is appraisal training worthy of a refresh?
Prioritise	**Career Paths/ Initiative**	Ability to use initiative is a key driver. Only decline question was around sharing ideas (down 15% points) How can staff be set free to use initiative? Is initiative something that is identified when selecting staff for promotion?
Investigate	**Shift Patterns**	The survey records dis-satisfaction with the 12/12 shift pattern from some staff but enthusiasm for new 24 hours shifts. How are shift patterns being evaluated?

29. The results from feedback via staff, managers, representative bodies and Authority members will be used to establish what the Authority should focus on in the future to help maintain and improve engagement amongst all staff groups.

30. Future strategies and plans for engagement and the resulting outcomes will be reported to Authority to enable Members to assess and scrutinise the outcomes of engagement. A further report will be produced with Equality and Diversity analysis that captures any differences in engagement levels in relation to different staff groups. That report will be presented to the Strategic Equality Group for review and will be communicated to the Diversity Action Group to help set any further actions for improvement before communicating to staff in due course.

31. If Members require any further information about the contents of this report, have views on the content of the report or require assistance in accessing the People Insight reports on the MFRA website please contact Wendy Kenyon Diversity and Consultation Manager at Wendykenyon@merseyfire.gov.uk

Equality and Diversity Implications

32. People Insight have provided Equality Reports for the Survey results by Gender, Ethnicity, Age etc. These reports will be analysed separately with a covering report provided to the next Strategic Equality Group

Staff Implications

33. Staff Implications will mainly be around projects and work streams arising out of the Survey action plans and the additional staff time and resources that will be needed to take the project in to implementation phase. Further research and investigation work that may be needed will also impact on staff time in areas such as People and Organisational Development and Strategy and Performance teams.

34. High levels of engagement result in high performing teams.

Legal Implications

35. The staff survey supports work that is underway to prepare for the LGA Equality Framework. The framework supports MFRA in its achievement to meet and exceed the Equality Act 2010- Public Sector Equality Duties. Being aware of the engagement levels and satisfaction levels of staff groups will help MFRA to target any changes and improvement required.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

36. The Survey has cost MFRA £12,000. This has been met from existing budgets. This represents approximately 0.02% of the overall staffing budget cost.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

37. The staff survey measures engagement levels which have been proven to positively impact on organisational results and performance across all sectors.

In particular, a high level of employee engagement/satisfaction has shown to lead to improved productivity, quality, and reducing accidents.

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

38. The survey allows organisations to measure engagement around areas of community engagement and service delivery to help enhance our services to the public in the future.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CLGA	Communities and Local Government Association
FBU	Fire Brigades Union
MFRA	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
MFRS	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service
POD	People and Organisational Development
SMG	Strategic Management Group