

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

11 JUNE 2026

MINUTES

Present: **Councillors** Les Byrom (Chair), Jan Grace, Sam Gorst, Dave Hanratty, Matt Kent, Ian Lewis, Andrew Makinson, Lena McCormick, Tony Murphy, Kieran Murphy, Lynn O'Keeffe, Chris Page, James Roberts, Lynne Thompson, Heather Westhead, Jerry Williams and Aimee Wright.

Also Present:	Chief Fire Officer	Nick Searle
	Deputy Chief Fire Officer	Dave Mottram
	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Ged Sheridan
	Director of Finance & Procurement	Mike Rea
	Monitoring Officer	Ria Groves

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Nigel Brown 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

Monitoring Officer, Ria Groves, asked for nominations for the appointment of the Chair of the Authority for 2026/27.

Nominee:

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

RESOLVED that Councillor Les Byrom be appointed as Chair of the Authority for 2026/27.

4. Appointment of Vice Chair

Nominations were requested for the two positions of the Vice Chairs for the municipal year 2026/27.

Nominee:

Councillor Jan Grace – nominated by Councillor Les Byrom and seconded by Councillor Heather Westhead.

Councillor James Roberts – nominated by Councillor Les Byrom and seconded by Councillor Heather Westhead.

RESOLVED that Councillors Jan Grace and James Roberts be appointed as Vice-Chairs of the Authority for 2026/27.

5. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 26th February 2026 be approved as an accurate record.

6. Membership of the Authority 26/27

Monitoring Officer, Ria Groves, advised Members that there was a change in Membership from the last year, with seven Members leaving the Authority (Councillors Banks, Bell, Finneran, Knight, McManus, Rennie and Sullivan). She welcomed those new Members who had been appointed for this municipal year (Councillors Brown, Kent, Lewis, McCormick, Murphy, Williams and Wright) alongside those Members reappointed for the year.

The Chair informed Members that an induction day was currently being arranged at the Training and Development Academy.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the membership of the Authority for 2026/27 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

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

Ria Groves noted that the structure of the Authority remained the same as the previous year, however, since publishing the report, she had been presented with confirmation that a new political group had been formed named Progressive Alliance which had changed the political proportionality.

The political proportionality therefore comprised 11 Labour Party (61.11%), 4 Progressive Alliance (22.22%), 2 Reform UK (11.11%) and 1 Conservative (5.56%). With 22.22%, Progressive Alliance were the main opposition party and the Opposition Spokesperson was confirmed as Lynne Thompson.

Councillor Dave Hanratty queried what parties Progressive Alliance was made up of and whether they would have to form an official group. Ria Groves advised that this new group was made up of the Liberal Democrats, Green Party and Your Party Liverpool. It was noted that under the legislation they had provided the correct paperwork to formally create a political group on the Authority.

Members agreed the following structure:

Committee Structure 2026/27	
Committee	Members
Community Safety & Protection Committee 9 Members (6, 2, 1)	1. Cllr (Chair) Jan Grace 2. Cllr Les Byrom 3. Cllr Lena McCormick 4. Cllr Tony Murphy 5. Cllr Chris Page 6. Cllr Aimee Wright 7. Cllr Sam Gorst 8. Cllr Kieran Murphy 9. Cllr Matthew Kent
Policy & Resources Committee 9 Members (6, 2, 1)	1. Cllr (Chair) James Roberts 2. Cllr Les Byrom 3. Cllr Dave Hanratty 4. Cllr Lynn O'Keeffe 5. Cllr Heather Westhead 6. Cllr Jerry Williams 7. Cllr Andrew Makinson 8. Cllr Lynne Thompson 9. Nigel Brown
Audit Committee 6 Members (4, 1, 1) (Plus 1 Co-opted Member*)	1. Cllr (Chair) Lynn O'Keeffe 2. Cllr Dave Hanratty 3. Cllr Chris Page 4. Cllr Jerry Williams 5. Cllr Andrew Makinson 6. Cllr Nigel Brown Anthony Boyle*
Scrutiny Committee 9 Members (6, 2, 1) (Plus 1 Co-opted Member*)	1. Cllr (Chair) Heather Westhead 2. Cllr Lena McCormick 3. Cllr Tony Murphy 4. Cllr Chris Page 5. Cllr Jerry Williams 6. Cllr Aimee Wright 7. Cllr Sam Gorst 8. Cllr Kieran Murphy 9. Cllr Matthew Kent Anthony Boyle*

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Appointments Committee 4 Members (3,1) Made up of the Chair, Vice Chairs, and 1 Opposition Spokesperson	1. Cllr (Chair) Les Byrom 2. Cllr Jan Grace 3. Cllr James Roberts 4. Cllr Lynne Thompson
Appeals Committee 4 Members (3,1) Made up of the Chair, Vice Chairs, and 1 Opposition Spokesperson	1. Cllr (Chair) Les Byrom 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 (Chair) Les Byrom 2. Cllr Jan Grace 3. Cllr James Roberts 4. Cllr Lynne Thompson Emily Spurrell
Member Development & Engagement Group (3,1)	1. Cllr (Chair) Lynn O'Keeffe 2. Cllr Tony Murphy 3. Cllr Heather Westhead 4. Cllr Andrew Makinson

It was noted that five Members had been nominated to Lead Member roles covering Protection, Prevention, People, Preparedness and Operational Response and it was agreed that this role would not attract a Special Responsibility Allowance.

The Chair confirmed that the Lead Members had been provided prior to the meeting as per below:

Preparedness	Councillor Jerry Williams
People	Councillor Jan Grace
Response	Councillor Lynne Thompson
Prevention	Councillor Heather Westhead
Protection	Councillor Lynn O'Keeffe

Pensions Board – Councillor Chris Page

RESOLVED that:

- a) the committees to be determined were agreed in appendix B of the report;
- b) the number of voting Members to be appointed to each Committee was determined and agreed 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 was 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 were confirmed;
- f) the nominations proposed by the Chair for the Lead Member roles were confirmed;
- g) the nomination proposed by the Chair for the Employer Representative on the Local Pension Board was confirmed; and

Members will inform Democratic Services be informed by Members prior to the start of any meeting if an alternative Member is attending on their behalf.

8. Meeting Dates 2026/27

Councillor Les Byrom recommended that Members put the dates for the year in their diary, however, to be mindful that dates could change if necessary.

Ria Groves noted that a discussion was taking place with the Chair of Audit to change the Audit Committee from 25th June to 30th June which seemed agreeable but would be picked up outside the meeting and confirmed to Members.

RESOLVED that the schedule of meeting dates and events for 2026/27 be approved.

9. Scheme of Members Allowance 2026/27

Ria Groves presented the proposed Scheme of Allowances for 2026/27 with the proposed allowances being detailed in Appendix A.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the Members' Allowances Scheme 2026/27 as contained in appendix A be approved; and

the Members Scheme of Allowance including a pay increase to the Scheme of Members Allowances in line with the Firefighters Pay Award for 2025/26 which would apply to the 2026/27 allowances and any inflationary increase to the Authority's Scheme of Members' Travel and Subsistence Allowance is aligned with CPI for the previous year's March CPI be noted.

10. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority Constitution 2026/27

Ria Groves advised that there were no major updates to report to Members and noted that any typographical errors had been addressed.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the draft Constitution for 2026/27 be approved;
- b) the Monitoring Officer be instructed to keep the constitution under review;
and

the Monitoring Officer be instructed to report back to the Authority in the event of any relevant changes in legislation impacting the Constitution.

11. Questions on Discharge of Functions

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

Liverpool	Councillor James Roberts
Knowsley	Councillor Lynn O'Keeffe
St Helens	Councillor Matt Kent
Sefton	Councillor Les Byrom
Wirral	Councillor Tony Murphy

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.

12. Appointment of Membership to Outside Bodies

The report detailed the Outside Bodies in which Members were to be appointed.

Ria Groves advised that the difference for 2026-27 was that the Growth Platform had moved from an appointment of a Member to that Outside Body to instead be undertaken by Officers.

Councillor Dave Hanratty noted some of these Outside Bodies had not met for a number of years, however, he highlighted the importance to continue with these Outside Bodies and if possible, to reach out to them to discuss good practice.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the Authority's current affiliations to outside bodies be noted;
- b) the continued affiliation with the Local Government Association (LGA) and who the representatives appointed to the Fire Services Commission

for 2026/27 were confirmed as Councillors Les Byrom, Councillor James Roberts and Councillor Jan Grace;

- c) the continued affiliation with the North West Local Authorities Employers Organisation be approved and who the representatives appointed to the North West Local Authorities Employers Organisation for 2026/27 were confirmed as Councillor James Roberts;
- d) the continued affiliation with the North West Fire and Rescue Advisory Forum be approved and the membership to represent the Authority were confirmed as Councillor James Roberts, Councillor Janet Grace and Opposition Spokesperson, Councillor Lynne Thompson;
- e) the continued affiliation with the Association of the Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Authorities be approved and the membership to represent the Authority were confirmed as Councillor James Roberts and Councillor Jan Grace;
- f) the delegation to the Chief Fire Officer to determine the continued affiliation with the Growth Platform and the representatives appointed on behalf of the Authority be approved.

13. Approved Conference and Outside Meetings

Ria Groves acknowledged that this was a standard item to ensure that Members attending any Outside Conference and Meetings were representing the Authority. The Chair added that if there was any training that Members would like to attend, the Authority would do what they could to improve their knowledge and support them.

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.

14. Meetings with National Politicians at Party Conference

Ria Groves advised Members that the report stated the permission to attend such meetings bespoke to the Authority and any fees and expenses claimed thereof could only relate to the Authority.

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 held 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

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

15. Members Allowance Payments 2025/26

The Chair advised that this was a backwards looking report looking at how much was spent in the last year. Ria Groves added that this report covered two financial years.

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

16. Annual Scrutiny Review 2025/26

Ria Groves introduced the report advising Members that this report was to update Members on the work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee in 2025-26. She drew Members' attention to paragraph 6 detailing the meetings held and topics scrutinised by Members.

Ria Groves looked forward to the municipal year 2026-27 and advised that all Members of the Scrutiny Committee would be invited to a Scrutiny Workshop in which the new Scrutiny Forward Work Plan would be devised. She noted that it was recommended to move one item that was not discussed on the previous SFWP which was the Management on Contaminants. This was due to an inspection by the HSE scheduled to take place not long after the last Committee so it would be more prudent to include that inspection and feed this back to Members.

Councillor Dave Hanratty thanked officers who presented those reports, giving Members the information they needed and noted the importance for open debate. He raised concerns around the increase in Musculo skeletal injuries in Firefighters over the age of 55 and that wider discussions needed to be had around the struggles of this. His other concern was around lithium-ion batteries and the increase in fires. He asked if the Authority was able to support the Electrical Safety Campaign.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the continued work of the Scrutiny Committee throughout 2025/26 and the matters considered in the Scrutiny Forward Work Plan be noted; and

the item forming part of the Scrutiny Forward Work Plan 2025/26 that remains outstanding (Management of Contaminants) be carried forward into 2026/27 be approved.

17. National Resilience CBRN Mass Decontamination Project - Radiation Portal Monitors

Chief Fire Officer, Nick Searle, introduced the report, advising that Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority were the lead Authority for UK National Resilience (NR).

It was advised that as part of the national capability uplift programme that supports NR, the MHCLG, Cabinet Office, and wider government departments were currently working to improve resilience against incidents of a Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) nature.

It was advised that a Radiation Portal Monitor (RPM) was a passive, non-intrusive detection system that scanned people for illicit or unauthorised radioactive materials. The Chief Fire Officer noted that purchasing RPMs would strengthen interoperability across blue-light services.

Members were advised that in order to procure the equipment, a further competition was undertaken in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the framework agreement used was the Home Office's Radiological Nuclear Detection Framework, providing a robust and competitive route to market. The bids were evaluated with the preferred bidder identified as Southern Scientific.

Members were advised that the contract award to Southern Scientific for the value of £605,500 would be funded from the grant received from HSG and did not impact the Authority's budget.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the contents of the report be noted; and

the award of a contract valued at £605,500 to Southern Scientific for the procurement of 30 x RPM be approved.

Close

Date of next meeting Thursday, 29 October 2026