MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

14 SEPTEMBER 2023

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Paul Tweed, Linda Maloney, Doreen Knight, Pat Moloney, Lesley Rennie, Ed Lamb

Also Present:		
	Ria Groves	Monitoring Officer
	Dave Mottram	Assistant Chief Fire Officer
	Mike Rea	Director of Finance and Procurement

1. Apologies

Apologies received from Councillors Dave Hanratty, Gill Wood, Terry Byron and Mr Anthony Boyle.

2. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED that there were no declarations of interest received in relation to any item.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 25th April 2023 were approved as an accurate record.

4. Health, Safety & Welfare Annual Report 2022/23

Group Manager, Craig Whitfield presented the Health, Safety & Welfare Annual Report 2022/23 providing an overview of workplace accidents, sickness and road traffic collisions.

Members were advised that the Authority had been working on enforcing a positive reporting culture, which had resulted in an increase in incidents reported. This enabled the Authority to ensure its equipment and PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) were working correctly and any faults could be quickly identified.

With regards to injuries during routine operational activities, it was noted that 14 of the 17 recorded were for staff over the age of 30. Councillor Moloney asked if there was a trend in injuries for staff over 30 and he was advised that nothing stood out in the data to suggest that.

It was reported that in previous years, there had been a decline in near miss reporting and as such, the Authority had made this a focus as there was a direct correlation between near miss reporting, culture and accidents. There had been

a steady increase of 61% since the previous year and it was agreed that this was a positive step forward.

The Chair asked for more information about the reporting process and Members were informed that it was very robust. For example, if someone were to slip outside, they would report that to their Line Manager or another Senior Officer and that would be logged. The line manger would consider if a cordon of the area or cleaning was needed and then this would be relayed to the Health and Safety Team. The person's welfare would be the focus and if they needed to attend hospital then a Station Manager or supervisor would escort them. The OSHENS Health and Safety Management System would be utilised to record the incident and the level of investigation would be determined. Witness statements would be collected if necessary and the incident would be reviewed by the Work Place Review Group to identify remedial action to mitigate against repeat incidents.

Members enquired as to how well understood this process was across the organisation and it was explained that the Health and Safety Team frequently published safety flashes to educate staff. The system was designed so that an incident could be reported in just two clicks to make it easy for people to report and so it could be monitored more accurately.

(Councillor Doreen Knight entered the meeting at 13.16)

The report also focused on road traffic collisions, property fires and injuries during routine activities. Members were provided with a review of incidents pre and post Covid.

Councillor Moloney asked if there had been any injuries or accidents resulting from failing PPE or equipment. Group Manager Whitfield confirmed there had not been any to his knowledge and there were robust procedures in place for PPE and equipment to ensure any concerns were investigated thoroughly.

The Members welcomed the report, noting how easy it was to read and Councillor Maloney asked how many blue light vehicles the service had in operation. It was explained that there were around 40 and they were used for Senior Managers to respond to incidents.

With regards to Covid, Members asked if the Fire Service had found it difficult to undertake preventative work during lockdown and if that had impacted the figures in this report. Members were advised that the Service had played a significant role in safeguarding the community during the pandemic and had been able to undertake prevention activities from the end of people's driveways in some instances. The Authority had continued to undertake preventative work during the pandemic so Members were advised that this had not impacted the figures. Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Dave Mottram assured Members that post Covid, the number of house fires had declined and that the rise in response to incidents was a result of working collaboratively with other emergency services to gain entry to premises.

Councillor Murphy enquired as to how many officers had sought medical attention as a result of the injuries detailed in the report and it was explained that some individuals had been to the walk-in and some had visited occupational health on site.

Group Manager Whitfield was asked if there were any boundaries to people reporting incidents that needed to be overcome and what the timescales were for reporting an injury during response. Members were assured that the Health and Safety Team had worked extensively to create a positive reporting culture through simplifying the OSHENS system and providing training to staff. Anecdotally, it was felt that as low level injuries were being reported, this message was making its way out to the staff across the organisation and this information could be used to monitor for trends.

With regards to reporting injuries at an incident, it was explained that at a big incident there would be a Safety Officer to deal with any welfare issues and any injuries could be reported through Fire Control in the first instance.

The Members were advised that the Authority fared well compared to the rest of the country in relation to accidents and injuries.

Councillor Rennie enquired as to the process for personnel overseas and it was explained that the International Search and Rescue Team had robust procedures in place for reporting any incidents as well as dedicated medical staff on site. When staff return to the UK, it was explained that the Occupational Health team also undertook a health review of the Authority's UK ISAR team.

With regards to light duties, it was noted that Occupational health managed that information and they could provide an update through the Health and Safety Committee.

Councillor Maloney asked if a leaflet drop in busy streets would help to raise awareness of parking issues when crews are responding to incidents and in turn help to reduce the number of collisions. Councillor Maloney raised the motion to add this to the recommendations and this was seconded by Councillor Murphy and agreed by the Members.

Councillor Lamb noted that Wirral Council were working on a parking strategy to get more controlled parking and limit the amount of vehicles stored on the street and he agreed to feed into that consultation some of the points raised by the Authority.

RESOLVED that:

a) the performance outcomes of the Authority against its H&S Performance targets for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 be scrutinised; and

b) leaflets on parking to be shared with the Authority Members and a leaflet drop on busy streets to be considered.

5. Scrutiny Forward Work Plan 2023-2025

Monitoring Officer, Ria Groves presented Scrutiny Forward Work Plan for 2023-2025 which incorporated topics for scrutiny from the Members and from previous Work Plans.

Members attention was drawn to the topic 'The Environment and its impact on MFRS's operational response' which was a significant piece of work for the Committee given the scope of the topic. It was explained that this would be broken down and spread out over two years with a deep dive on elements like wildfires, floods alternative fuels and pathway to net zero.

The proposal was for the document to be flexible so that it could be added to if Members wanted to explore more topics. It was recommended that the work plan be shared with the full Authority on the 12th October for approval with a report going back to Authority at the end of the year with a review of what Scrutiny has covered and any recommendations they may have.

The Chair requested that culture and inclusivity be broadened to include behaviour and he asked why it was not being discussed until the next municipal year. It was explained that this was a result of timetabling the topics in rather than for a specific reason.

Councillor Maloney requested that areas of Scrutiny be called back to identify any changes or improvements.

RESOLVED that

a) Members were content with the review undertaken of the Scrutiny Forward Work Plan 2023-2025; and

b) the Scrutiny Forward Work Plan in appendix A was submitted to Authority and approved.

Close

Date of next meeting Thursday, 25 January 2024