MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Statement of Assurance 2022-23

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority

ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2022/23

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MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2022/23

1. Foreword

Fire and Rescue Authorities are accountable for their performance and as such, information regarding effectiveness and value for money should be accessible, transparent and accurately reported to the communities they serve. Along with legislation which governs how FRA's provide their services, the revised Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for England 2018 requires Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (MFRA) to produce this Annual Statement of Assurance. The Statement of Assurance focuses on Authority governance, performance and activity that took place between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023.

'Fire and rescue authorities must provide annual assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and show how they have had due regard to the expectations set out in their integrated risk management plan and the requirements included in the Framework. To provide an accessible way in which communities, Government, local authorities and other partners may make a valid assessment of their local fire and rescue authority's performance.'

Home Office Guidance on Statements of Assurance for FRA's in England

The cost-of-living crisis has affected everyone in recent years, but in Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service we have always known that the poorest people in society suffer the most and they are often also the people who are most at risk of fire in the home. For this reason we continue to visit the homes of tens of thousands of vulnerable people every year to help reduce their risk from fire along with other interventions that help keep people safe and reduce their risk from hazards such as road traffic collisions and getting into difficulty in water.

Our excellent emergency response remained a high level throughout the year and residents of Merseyside and its many visitors can be assured of a rapid and effective response when they need us.

During the last quarter of 2022/23 we were preparing for our third full inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services and although the bulk of the inspection and the publication of our report took place in 2023/24, which is out of scope for this Statement of Assurance, it would be remiss of us not to inform readers that Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service remains one of the highest performing Services in the country, retaining our previous "Outstanding" judgements with no areas judged as "requires Improvement" or "Inadequate". The report can be read Publications - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (justiceinspectorates.gov.uk) The culture of the fire and rescue service nationally has been highlighted this year and we would like to reassure residents of Merseyside and beyond that poor behaviour is not tolerated in this Service and we have taken action to implement all the requirements of HMICFRS's culture review. We have continued to embed our Leadership Message which sets out our expectations for the Service and the national Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services. We will continue to work to make sure that our organisational culture is welcoming to people from all backgrounds and everyone feels that they belong.

In our Integrated Risk Management Plan 2021-24 (IRMP) and Service Delivery Plan 2022-23, our focus once again included an increase in our front line response, and to our knowledge, this is not mirrored anywhere else in the country (as highlighted in our HMICFRS inspection reports). The specialisms and capabilities of our staff and the equipment we provide will be enhanced to meet all the known and emergent risks on Merseyside.

Over the remaining year of the IRMP, we are building a new state of the art Training and Development Academy and National Resilience Centre of Excellence in Long Lane, Aintree. This will allow us to expand and increase our training, with the potential to become a centre of excellence for national training. As part of that project, we will create a new super-station to replace two fire stations that are reaching the end of their useful life, whilst securing an improvement in our response times. We have recruited more Fire Protection Officers to increase our ability to inspect high risk buildings and assist building owners and occupiers to comply with fire safety law. We continue to broaden our fire prevention activity to include providing free home fire safety checks for vulnerable people living in more deprived areas as well as continuing with our focus on older Merseyside residents.

We hope that you find this Statement of Assurance useful and that it explains the context and scale of the challenges faced by the Authority now and in the future. It is intended to direct readers to other published reports, rather than repeating existing material and as a result it contains several hyperlinks. If you require copies of any documents or have any comments or questions please contact Jackie Sutton – Integrated Risk Management Planning Officer on 0151 296 4563 or by email on jackiesutton@merseyfire.gov.uk

2. Introduction

Merseyside is a Metropolitan area in the north west of England, which straddles the Mersey Estuary and includes the metropolitan districts of Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral.

Merseyside spans 249 square miles (645 Km2) of land containing a mix of high density urban areas, suburbs, semi-rural and rural locations, but overwhelmingly the land use is urban. Its largest business district is in Liverpool city centre, but Merseyside is made up of five metropolitan districts, each of which has at least one major town centre and outlying suburbs.

According to the 2021 Census population figures show that Merseyside has a population 1,423,300. Since the 2011 census, the population of Merseyside has grown by 3% with each metropolitan district showing overall increases. There are slightly more females than males in Merseyside (51.5% female against 48.5% male). Based on the 2021 Census, of the total population of over 65's in Merseyside is 27.9%. 91.7% are classed as White and 8.3% Black and Minority Ethnic

Our Profile of Merseyside Demography, Equality and Diversity – Knowing our Communities, available on the MFRS Portal, outlines the communities we serve. There are some areas of affluence, for example in West Wirral and North Sefton, but large areas of Merseyside fall within the highest ratings of social deprivation. There remain large pockets of deprivation with high levels of social exclusion and crime.

Merseyside is one of the most deprived areas in England, with Knowsley being the third most deprived local authority in England and Liverpool being fourth. There are better off areas, for example in West Wirral and

North Sefton, but large areas of Merseyside fall within the highest ratings of social deprivation, which has the side effects of high levels of poverty, social exclusion and crime.

On the 26th September 2019 Central and Local Government released the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019. The picture across Merseyside is not positive, with evidence that the area has become more deprived when compared to the previous 2015 Indices of Multiple Deprivation release.

The following table compares – by council area - the count of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) in the 10% most deprived areas of England:

District	2015	2019	Difference	% Difference
Knowsley	45	46	1	2.2%
Liverpool	134	145	11	8.2%
Sefton	38	38	0	0.0%
St. Helens	28	29	1	3.6%
Wirral	44	52	8	18.2%
Grand Total	289	310	21	7.3%

The table identifies that with the exception of Sefton, each district saw an increase in the number of LSOA's which are in the 10% most deprived LSOA's in England.

In the current economic climate, where resources are increasingly under pressure, it is challenging to constantly deliver high quality services across all areas of the organisation. This, however, highlights the importance of keeping equality, diversity and inclusion at the forefront of our minds, ensuring we understand how our decisions affect our business, communities and the people who work for MFRA.

We believe that fire does discriminate against the old and infirm and those in socio-economically disadvantaged areas. We have developed policies and procedures based on Risk, Demand and Vulnerability to identify and target our efforts towards the most vulnerable and at risk within our communities. Our Integrated Risk Management planning is based on these three main factors; the risks in Merseyside, the demand for our services and the vulnerability of our communities and people who live in them. These three themes all make a difference to the safety of people, buildings and places in Merseyside.

We will continue to fit smoke alarms free of charge to people aged over 65 and those referred to us by other agencies that understand fire risk, or by our staff as part of specific campaigns following fatal fires. Other Merseyside residents can access free fire safety advice on request. This can include the installation of smoke alarms if necessary and the person requesting the service is asked to cover the unit cost of the alarm.
Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority actively supports the reduction of Hate Crime across Merseyside and all our fire stations remain Safe Havens. We use target hardening techniques to prevent incidents and/or reduce the effects on victims.

To date, we have continued to maintain a very fast average response to incidents through innovative use of crewing systems and placement of appliances relevant to the risk in that station area. By targeting our prevention activity and working smarter, we are still having a real impact on the safety of the people of Merseyside.

MFRA published the Service Delivery Plan 2022-23 in April 2022. The Integrated Risk Management Plan 2021-24 was published on 1st July 2021 following two periods of consultation with stakeholders.

The Integrated Risk Management Plan sets out how we will continue to deliver our services to meet local risks. It describes a fire and rescue service that is leaner than in past years, but one where imaginative use of resources is helping reverse that trend and services are delivered in the most effective and efficient way. Anyone who needs us in an emergency will still receive one of the fastest responses in the country.

The Service Delivery Plan establishes the standards of performance expected and reported on the 2021/22 outcomes. The IRMP, Annual Station Plans and Functional Plans set the Service Delivery Plan objectives for the year.

3. Governance arrangements

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority was established on 1st April 1986 by the Local Government Act 1985 which made provision for joint authorities to be established in the major metropolitan areas following the abolition of the metropolitan county councils.

Although the Authority does not have all the powers of a Council, it is nonetheless a Local Authority in its own right, separate and distinct from the constituent councils. It is therefore subject to many of the same rules and regulations which govern other Local Authorities.

The Authority

The Authority is made up of 18 Elected Members, all of whom must be a Councilor elected to one of the five constituent district councils within Merseyside (Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral). There is also an independent person on the Authority. Members of the Authority have a responsibility to the whole community of Merseyside and are directly accountable to the people of Merseyside for the running of the Fire and Rescue Service. All Members meet together as the Fire and Rescue Authority. Meetings of the Authority are normally open to the public and details are published on our website www.merseyfire.gov.uk

The Authority has ultimate responsibility for decision making but has delegated many decisions to committees as part of their Terms of Reference (available to view in the Constitution) and officers. Elected Members work closely with officers (the staff employed by the Authority) to develop policies, plans and strategies to give direction to the Service and to ensure that services are delivered in line with the Authority's objectives.

There are a number of organisations which are independent from the Authority, but have an impact on its service areas. In order that the Authority can maintain effective partnerships with a number of these organisations, Members of the Authority sit on the various committees and forums that are responsible for them:

- Association of Metropolitan Fire & Rescue Authorities
- Local Government Association
- Merseyside Community Safety Partnership/ Safer Merseyside Partnership
- North West Employers' Organisation
- North West Fire and Rescue Advisory Forum

Our legal responsibilities

The full Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority Constitution and Governance can be found on our website. It details how the Authority conducts its business and includes detailed procedures and codes of practice including:

- Members code of conduct
- MFRA Constitution 2022/23 and allowances
- Meetings, agendas and decisions
- Complaints Procedure

The Authority has approved and adopted a Code of Corporate Governance which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE framework. The key principles of the Authority's Code of Corporate Governance are outlined below;

Three high level principles underpin Corporate Governance:

- Openness and inclusivity
- Accountability
- Integrity

The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework

The Government has a responsibility to ensure that the public is adequately protected. For fires and other emergencies, it does this by providing significant financial resources, giving authorities the power to raise additional local funding, and maintaining a statutory framework within which FRA's should operate.

The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for England 2018 sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for FRA's in England. It recognises that operational matters are best determined locally by FRA's in partnership with their communities.

The priorities are:

- To identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their area may face, make provision for prevention and protection activities and respond to incidents appropriately.
- To work in partnership with their communities and a wide range of partners locally and nationally to deliver their service
- To be accountable to communities for the service they provide.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority are satisfied that the systems they have in place fulfil the National Framework requirements.

4. Overview of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service

Our Vision: -

To be the best Fire & Rescue Service in the UK, *acting as one team putting our communities first*

Our Purpose

Here to serve. Here to protect. Here to keep you safe

Our Aims:

- ***Protect***
  We protect people from harm*, provide advice, guidance and when absolutely necessary use enforcement to keep the public and our firefighters safe*

- ***Prevent***
  We are there for you*. We are a visible presence that provides reassurance, support and advice. Alongside our partners, we protect the most vulnerable and reduce inequalities*

- ***Prepare***
  We will always be the best that we can be *by having highly skilled and trained people who plan for every risk and keep our teams safe and effective*

- ***Respond***
  We will be there when you need us most, pulling out all the stops to save lives. Whether we are taking 999 calls, or attending incidents, we keep our communities safe

Our Service:

We are bold - Embracing new ideas to build on the confidence and trust the community place in us.
We are professional - Always giving our best to be the best we can be.
We are safe - Protecting lives and keeping our firefighters safe.
We are built to help - Looking after people and looking after each other.
We are positive - Recognising how far we have come and being positive about the future.

We are relentless - Overcoming barriers to help people feel safe.

We shape our actions by embedding **OUR VALUES** into the way we deliver our services:

We serve with Courage

- By never settling for the status quo
- By being decisive and calm under pressure
- By having determination to see things through
- By being prepared to fail
- By celebrating diversity and being open to new opportunities and challenges
- By setting high standards and not being embarrassed for doing so
- By challenging ourselves to be better

We serve with Integrity

- By doing the right thing even when it is hard or no one is looking
- By leading by example
- By standing up for what matters
- By being open, honest and fair
- By making decisions based on facts
- By explaining the why
- By being consistent
- By always doing what we say we are going to do

We serve with Compassion

- By acting with empathy and kindness
- By actively listening - hearing what is being said
- By going the extra mile to help
- By looking after and supporting each other, noticing what is going on for people
- By recognising each other's contribution
- By creating a sense of belonging
- By embracing and understanding difference

Responsibility & accountability of the Chief Fire Officer

The Chief Fire Officer is the Head of Paid Service in law under S. 4 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989. The Chief Fire Officer is responsible for;

- *Ensuring that the staffing needs of the organisation are adequate to perform the Authority's statutory functions*
- *Ensuring that the discharge of the Authority's functions is efficiently and effectively co-ordinated*
- *Arranging for and ensuring the proper appointment and management of the Authority's staff.*
- *Arranging for and ensuring the effective organisation of the Authority's staff in an appropriate structure with relevant departments.*

The Chief Fire Officer is accountable to the Authority. Details of the powers delegated to the Chief Fire Officer (and in their absence the Deputy Chief Fire Officer,) who may further delegate to any member of either the Executive Team or the Strategic Leadership Team as appropriate, can be found on page 32 of MFRA Constitution 2022/23.

The success of our service provision is largely dependent on the skills, abilities and dedication of our staff. That is why we invest resources in ensuring that our people are the best they can be through training and development, appraisal, health and wellbeing.

Staffing levels, including the number of officers, can be found on the
DCLG 2022/23 (Department for Communities and Local Government) and
CIPFA 2022/23 (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) websites. A log in is required.

Organisational Development

Each member of staff has their individual training, learning and development needs identified by their line manager at their annual performance appraisal and development review. This in turn informs an annual training needs analysis. This is used to identify new equipment, methods of working, health and safety risks, and compliance with legislation or succession planning which have arisen, or may, arise in the coming years. Similarly with succession planning, heads of departments work with our People and Organisational Development team to develop plans to ensure key areas of work are resilient when members of staff leave the Service.

Our People Strategy and Implementation Plan were published in 2021. These documents can be found on the Website under Authority meetings - Community Safety and Protection Committee 4th September 2018. We revised and updated these on 30th June 2021 at the Fire Authority meeting.

Leadership Development

MFRA recognises the huge contribution our managers and leaders can make to our organisation. To support their development, and that of emerging managers, and to ensure the changing requirements of the organisation are being met, we invest time and training hours in these individuals.

Leadership courses such as CMI (Chartered Management Institute) Levels 3 and 5, Institute of Occupational Safety and Health) IOSH and National Examination Board of Safety and Health (NEBOSH) are attended by uniformed and non-uniformed staff. Staff interested in development into the role of supervisory manager can enter the Supervisory Management Gateway and attend operational incident command courses at the Fire Service College. MFRA requires operational staff seeking progression to undertake the Institute of Fire Engineers (IFE) examinations to demonstrate the underpinning knowledge required for the role. Operational managers are offered courses aimed at developing their knowledge, skills and values to enable them to effectively take over command on the incident ground.

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service is developing a High Potential Programme to support the development of staff with leadership potential and the drive to take the Service forward. The programme will seek to develop their skills and knowledge around personal, organisational and community leadership, enhancing their

potential to ensure we continue to deliver the best possible outcomes for the public. Always open, the High Potential Programme allows managers to identify those with potential and endorse them for focussed career development opportunities.

Staff consultation - Representative Bodies

Uniformed staff are represented by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and the Fire Officers Association (FOA), non-uniformed staff by trade unions, UNISON and UNITE. All are invited to take part in consultation around changes to staffing levels or conditions of service, the IRMP and any changes to the service MFRA provide. All are active members of Joint Secretaries, which is a meeting which brings together the representative bodies with the Authority's Consultation Manager and our Director of People and Organisational Development.

Staff Survey

In November/December 2022 Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority conducted a 5th staff survey, facilitated by an independent organisation (People Insight). 32% of staff responded to the Survey (317 of 999 staff). This is a survey that we conduct every two years, so our last survey took place in 2020.

86% of our staff are engaged with the organisation, support what we are doing and feel valued:

2014	55%
2016	74%
2018	75%
2020	88%
2022	86%

- 84% of respondents said they got a sense of accomplishment from their work
- 76% feel MFRA treats people fairly, regardless of ethnic background, gender (including transgender), religion, sexual orientation, disability, pregnancy or age
- 88% understand the new Leadership message (Our Vision, Purpose, Aims)

As a result of the Staff Surveys MFRA developed a set of engagement principles which are embedded across the service. When staff were asked to name "what is the best thing about working for MFRS", comments included:

Purpose – Feeling that you are making a difference to people's lives.
Serving communities and making a difference – The feeling that we are doing our best to protect the public and those most in need
Working as part of a strong and close-knit team - Feeling part of a team and being proud to say I contribute to the success of MFRS
Learning and development – I feel like I am continually learning, development opportunities
Job security – job security in a safe, clean, health and friendly working environment.

A summary report on the 2022 Staff Survey Results provided by People Insight was considered by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority on 6th April 2023. This report summarises all of the results produced by People Insight. The next Staff Survey will take place in 2024.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Public Sector Equality Duty of the Equality Act 2010, requires public bodies to consider all individuals when carrying out their day to day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. MFRA is committed to considering equality and diversity in the way we provide our services and the MFRA Equality and Diversity Statement and supporting documentation is available on the website.

We published an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion 2022-23 which set out how we have met our legal obligations and improved outcomes for our communities.

The risks we face in Merseyside

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires every fire and rescue authority to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan to identify foreseeable risks and develop services to respond to those risks and help prevent incidents occurring. The Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan 2021-24 meets these obligations. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 also places a legal duty on local emergency responders to carry out assessments on the risks to their area and publish them. The Merseyside Community Risk Register identifies the areas of potential risk to the population and infrastructure of Merseyside and the nature of that risk. The likelihood of an event occurring has been assessed using historical evidence and projected occurrence data relating to the risk occurring over a five-year period at the magnitude reflected within the outcome description. The potential impact of such an emergency has been assessed with regard to health, social, economic and environmental effects in accordance with national guidance.

Social Risk

We know that deprivation and environment can increase risk from fire and other emergencies. In Merseyside there are some areas of affluence, for example in West Wirral and North Sefton, but large areas of Merseyside fall within the highest ratings of social deprivation which has the side effects of high levels of poverty, social exclusion and crime. The picture across Merseyside is not positive with evidence that the area has become more deprived than the previous 2015 Indices of Multiple Deprivation release.

The Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019, released by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in September 2019, indicates that Merseyside is one of the most deprived areas in England, with Knowsley being the 3rd most deprived local authority England and Liverpool being 4th. We consider this when we plan our services and target those services at people we identify as most at risk. We are particularly focusing on the increasing number of older people who are now remaining in their own homes.

Environmental & Economic Risks

There are other types of risk too. Other risks within the Merseyside area include:

- The river Mersey and the resulting high volume of shipping
- Over 200 high rise buildings
- Coastline on the west of the MFRA area
- John Lennon Airport
- Under and over ground rail links, including under the River Mersey
- Two road tunnels under the River Mersey
- Two premier league football stadia
- Liverpool City Centre and many heritage buildings
- Dock estates in Liverpool and Birkenhead
- Beaches and areas of natural beauty such as Freshfield Pinewoods, Hilbre Island and Carr Mill Dam
- RAF Woodvale airfield, Altcar Army camp and rifle range.
- Industrial estates accommodating large factories down to small industrial units.
- Ten Control of Major Accident Hazard (COMAH) sites such as petrochemical plants.
- Large shopping areas including Liverpool One in the city centre.
- Three universities with large blocks of student accommodation both in and outside the city centre.
- Terrorism risks associated with city centre locations
- Major waste recycling centres

5. Risks beyond our borders

National & Local Resilience

Over recent years the risk of large scale emergency incidents has increased in the UK. This can be attributed to climate change and increased incidence of terrorist activities. As a direct result and to mitigate this risk the Government introduced the 'National Resilience' programme.

MFRA is the lead authority for the delivery of National Resilience on behalf of Home Office. These arrangements include the management and assurance of National Resilience Capabilities, mobilisation and coordination of national assets at major incidents, the coordination of all National Resilience training and the management of the servicing and maintenance contract for all National Resilience vehicles and equipment. MFRA also provides a substantial commitment by hosting an Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team, a USAR canine team, USAR Tactical Advisors (Tac Ads), a High Volume Pump (HVP), a Detection, Identification and Monitoring (DIM) vehicle with a group of DIM advisors and Mass Decontamination Unit (MDU). We also have two type B flood rescue teams and two Flood Tactical Advisor declared on the DEFRA national flood rescue asset register. All of these assets are available at all times for national deployment.

MFRA is also the lead for the UK International Search and Rescue Team (UKISAR), which is an internationally deployable, heavy classified Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team. This team is available for deployment to incidents anywhere in the world on behalf of the UK Government.

Under Sections 13 and 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 MFRA are required to have in place mutual assistance arrangements with neighbouring FRA's. These agreements are regularly reviewed.

Management of Risk

The fire and rescue service is a 24 hour a day, 365 days a year operation and as a result MFRA produces plans that enable it to respond to any events that could threaten service delivery in Merseyside. These plans include:

- Service Delivery Plan 2022-23 for details of actions for 2022-23
- Service Delivery Plan 2023-24 for details of 2022/23 performance indicator outcomes
- Integrated Risk Management Plan 2021-24
- Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 - 2026-27 Budget Authority 24th February 2022 Appendix C
- Our Corporate Risk Register 22-23 can be found in Authority papers (Policy and Resources Committee 15th December 2022)

All serve to identify and plan for existing and potential risks to the Authority's assets and services.

Our Business Continuity Management Policy provides clear and defined strategies to address the following:

- Total loss of any Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service Department.
- Significant/partial damage to any Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority Department.
- Significant/partial Failure of the Information Technology system.
- Loss of /damage to information/data
- Loss of/disruption to primary utilities.
- Loss of staff/Pandemic.
- Loss of suppliers.

Business Continuity Plans have been prepared and are tested regularly; having been used effectively during the pandemic in particular.

6. Our Services to the Community

MFRA operates within clearly defined statutory and policy framework requirements as set out in the:

- The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- The Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (Order) 2007
- The Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- Localism Act 2011
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for England 2018
- Local Government Acts 1972 to date

- The Service Delivery Plan 2023-24 highlights MFRA's commitment to delivering an excellent service to the communities of Merseyside. This document brings together actions from the Integrated Risk

Management Plan 2021-24, Station Community Safety Delivery Plans, Functional Plans, Equality and Diversity planning and details of outcomes from 2022/23. All these plans are available to view through the MFRA Portal and website.

Operational Response

The Authority's priorities clearly stated in the Service Delivery Plan 2022-23 are:

- To maintain an effective emergency response to meet risk across Merseyside with safety and effectiveness at its core
- The Operational Response function ensures that the Authority, on behalf of the public, is assured with regard to the readiness of its operational workforce, appliances, stations and equipment to respond appropriately and in a timely manner to emergencies, and that when we do respond our firefighters, procedures and equipment are safe and effective.
- The Operational Response function is led by an Area Manager who is responsible for the operational element of the MFRA workforce. This equates to approximately 655 operational staff across the 22 Fire Stations, Marine Rescue, Fire Control and Officer Group (figures at March 2023).

Protection (legislative fire safety)

The Protection function will improve the safety and wellbeing of the communities of Merseyside by reducing risks and incidents in the built environment. Through education and regulating those responsible for keeping buildings safe, encouraging people to adopt safer behaviours and delivering proportionate and robust fire protection activities, complying with its statutory responsibilities.

Our competent protection personnel target premises in line with our risk based inspection programme, utilising data and business intelligence to optimise resources. We proactively plan and adapt to the diverse and changing needs of the community, ensuring services are equitably available to all. We use our powers under relevant legislation and in accordance with the Regulators Code, to take effective enforcement action, where compliance is not demonstrated. Furthermore, we will look to support businesses via the provision of clear guidance, working with them to improve standards of safety, ultimately seeking to help the local and national economy to grow.

We collaborate with other agencies such as regional (FRS), Local Authorities, the Care Quality Commission and Merseyside Police and where appropriate, share resources to foster efficiency and effectiveness. This may involve formal arrangements such as the Primary Authority Scheme (PAS) or the Liverpool City Plan. We also work with our internal functions to combine risk information about our communities and store it in one central information management system.

We allocate our personnel resources and their respective skill sets appropriately to address current risks, plan and anticipate future risks and subsequently inform medium to longer term functional needs. Modern Buildings, particularly those with engineered solutions, are designed to assist our firefighters. Through our team's technical knowledge of these facilities and the expertise of our planning and building regulations team, we will provide relevant fire safety training to operational crews and other relevant internal stakeholders in order to enhance their capabilities.

Prevention

- **PEOPLE**
  - Home Safety
  - High risk and vulnerable adults

- **PLACE**
  - Community Safety Partnerships
  - Arson reduction
  - Road safety and water Safety

- **YOUTH EDUCATION**
  - Beacon Project
  - Fire Cadets
  - Princes Trust

Our Priorities:

PEOPLE – Home Safety/High risk vulnerable adults department:

- Reduce accidental dwelling fires and associated death and injury through data led plans.
- Identify, target and protect vulnerable people and keep safe those most at risk from fire.
- Determinedly reach into existing and emerging communities as an active, engaged and welcomed stakeholder to reduce the risk of fire and other emergencies.

PLACE – Community Safety department:

- Work with Community Safety Partnerships to reduce arson and anti-social behaviour in higher demand areas.
- Work with Merseyside Road Safety Partnership to improve road safety and reduce deliberate vehicle misuse.
- Work with partners in the Merseyside Water Safety Forum to improve public safety and promote the safe use of our waterways.

YOUTH EDUCATION -

- Develop a Children and Younger persons plan and embed our Youth Education programmes in our Service.
- Deliver high quality Youth Education programmes from 'cradle to career'.

- Work with the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership to maximise Youth Education which will lead to fewer ASB activities and contribute to less Serious Violence.

7. Our Performance

The MFRA Service Delivery Plan 2023-24 reports on performance for 2022/23 and establishes the Key (KPI) and Local Performance Indicators (LPI's) and service delivery standards for 2023/24. Performance against the KPI's is reported to Authority in the Service Delivery Plan reports and to the Strategy and Performance Board and Performance Management Group (PMG) on a quarterly and monthly basis respectively.

Over the years we have refined our approach to Prevention and Protection, using intelligence to target our activities on the most vulnerable people and highest risk buildings. This is reflected in our planning and performance, with Home Fire Safety Checks, and Safe and Well Visits, being delivered to specifically targeted people identified as being in need of our intervention.

The risk profile of Merseyside is changing. The population is now increasing after decades of decline however it is also ageing. The link between old age and vulnerability to fire is well recognised within MFRA. Our Safe and Well visits enhance our Home Fire Safety Checks which are delivered by operational and community safety teams to specifically targeted people identified as being in need of our intervention.

All fire stations produced and reported on a Community Safety Station Delivery Plan, in consultation with partners and stakeholders, to agree local targets for priorities within in each station area. These plans are available to view in community fire stations and in the Service Delivery Plan 2022-23

Performance is managed and reported on at all levels and in all functions, with staff working hard to reduce the number of emergency incidents that occur in Merseyside. The table below illustrates the number of incidents attended by type, for an average day between 2012/13 and 2021/22. The table identifies that during 2022/23, 50.1 incidents were attended on a daily basis, this is the highest count of daily incidents measured over the 10 year period. However, what should be taken into account is that in the majority of incident types, there have been reductions in incidents. The increase is primarily due to an increase in Special Services, especially with the FRS assisting partners and other agencies more and more each year. This provides evidence that working with local partners and MFRA's own initiatives and campaigns has had a beneficial impact on the people and communities of Merseyside.

Average Count of Incidents attended per day

Incident Type	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Accidental Fires in the Home	3.1	3.2	2.9	3.0	2.7	2.5	2.5	2.4	2.2	2.3	2.1
Other Building and Property Fires	2.5	2.3	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.0	1.8	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.6
Vehicle Fires	2.0	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.3	2.3	1.9	1.8	1.3	1.7	1.4
All Antisocial Behaviour Fires	11.8	15.8	12.0	12.5	13.0	13.2	14.5	9.7	12.0	13.5	14.4
False Automatic Fire Alarms	12.5	7.5	7.7	7.9	8.6	9.3	9.0	10.1	9.2	9.6	9.8
Other False Alarms	4.7	4.5	4.4	4.8	5.2	5.8	5.6	5.3	5.8	6.9	7.4
Road Traffic Collisions	1.3	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.7	1.5	1.7	2.0	1.5	2.3	2.3
Other Special Services	5.3	5.6	5.6	6.0	6.8	7.1	7.3	8.7	10.1	12.4	12.2
Grand Total	43.0	42.0	38.2	39.9	42.4	43.8	44.1	41.5	43.5	50.1	51.1

What others have said about our performance?

"The MVRP works closely with Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, collaborating on a number of projects focused on keep our young people safe and away from risky situations, while empowering them with greater self-awareness and renewed confidence, helping to raise their aspirations and put them on the right path to a brighter future.

"The Beacon and Fire Champions projects in particular bring together a range of partners, coordinated by MFRS, and give them the opportunity to forge better relationships with young people, ultimately building community resilience through open and honest communication. These projects go from strength to strength and continue to receive excellent feedback and results. I look forward to continuing this relationship and working with MFRS to both develop these existing projects and create new ones."

Supt Georgina Garvey
Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership (MVRP)

"*FRS safeguarding colleagues have been fully committed to the safeguarding partnerships as always. The move from an Adults combined Merseyside Board to 5 separate Boards has obviously impacted on time and resources but as Chair of two of those Boards I can confirm that the commitment from the lead is steadfast and the contributions made at the Boards are well received and important. His reach across Merseyside and his national connections also benefit all the boards . In addition the extra benefits we all gain in terms of the community projects that happen and the use of FRS facilities for partnership events is very appreciated. FRS are a valued partner to the safeguarding community in Merseyside*."

Sue Redmond
Chair of the Knowsley and Wirral Safeguarding Adults Partnership and is the Fire Service representative for the National Independent Safeguarding Chairs Meeting

"Really appreciate all the support."

"Thanks for everything, your support over the years has been really top notch which has made my life far easier."

"Just a short working relationship but very impressed with the whole delivery of NR. This is in no short part due to the people like you that are making it work."

"Thanks very much…..you never fail to deliver!"

"Thank you and your team for your continuous unfaltering patience and assistance over the last few years. It has been a genuine pleasure to work with you."

Training Course Feedback from National Resilience SPOCS

8. Financial Performance

2022/23 Budget and 5-Year Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2022/23 – 2026/27;

For many years now the Authority has approved a rolling 5-year comprehensive medium term financial plan (MTFP). The MTFP takes into account Revenue, Capital, Reserves and Prudential Borrowing forecasts.

The Authority's Budget meeting on 24th February 2022 approved the 2022/23 – 2026/27 MTFP and it was based on a number of key assumptions around; future pay awards; other costs; and future Government funding support. The Budget and MTFP, assuming all options hold out, delivers a balanced financial position for 2022/23 and 2023/2024. A potential financial challenge from 2024/25 was forecast, however, due to the significant uncertainty over future Government support and future costs (particularly pay awards and the impact of the McCloud remedy in relation to pensions), this challenge was noted by the Authority at this time. The Authority has an excellent track record of dealing with any financial challenges it faces, and If any future challenge does materialise then the Authority will approve a plan to meet that challenge.

The Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2026/27 agreed at the Authority Budget meeting on 24th February 2022, can be found on the MFRA website.

Actual financial performance of the Authority against the approved 2022/23 revenue, capital and reserve budgets is monitored closely during the year and the Authority received quarterly financial review updates.

After taking into account the year-end earmarked reserve requests of £0.924m, the net revenue expenditure was £3.289m lower than the budget. The Authority approved the use of the £3.289m underspend to fund an increase in the inflation reserve of £0.382m to mitigate future inflation risks, and, a £2.907m increase in the capital reserve to reduce future capital borrowing. After taking these reserve adjustments into account the Authority's overall expenditure is consistent with its budget. Capital spend for the year was £18.951m, resulting in a variance of £6.476m against the £25.427m budget. The reason for the variance can be broken down into; a £6.334m re-phasing of planned spend from 2022/23 into future years, requiring the carry forward of capital budget; and; a net underspend and saving on capital projects of £0.142m.

Our long term financial challenges and commitments

The Authority approved a scheme to build a new training centre and a new fire station to provide outstanding training facilities and replace two existing fire stations (Aintree and Croxteth) at a cost of £41m. In order to reduce the requirement to fund this investment via borrowing the Authority has built up a capital reserve of £24m through one-off savings and the re-alignment of existing reserves, and, identified assets it can sell to generate over £3m in capital receipts.

Due to the level of uncertainty around the forecasts, the Authority will consider any future challenges as part of the 2024/2025 budget setting process when some of these uncertainties should be resolved. The Authority has established specific reserves to cover the risk of a variation to the key assumptions in the MTFP in 2023/2024, and these reserves would allow the Authority time to approve structural changes to deliver any required permanent savings over the longer term.

2022/23 Statement of Accounts and Audit Opinion

The Authority has a statutory duty to approve and sign-off for publication a set of financial statements, the "Statement of Accounts", for the previous year usually before 30th September of the following year. The Statement of Accounts 2022-23 sets out the financial activities of the Authority for the year ended 31st March 2023, with comparative figures for the previous financial year. These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the 2022/23 Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting (the Code) as published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and are based upon International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). The Code and relevant guidance notes specifies the principles and practices of accounting required to give a "true and fair" view of the financial position and transactions of the Authority.

The Authority's Auditor, Grant Thornton, is required to report on the Authority's financial statements and if in their opinion they;

a. Give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority's income and expenditure for the year; and

b. Have been prepared in accordance with the relevant local authority accounting Code(s) and standards.

At the time of preparing the assurance statement Grant Thornton has issued a draft "Audit Findings" report and it confirms that the Statement of Accounts 2022-23 meet the criteria above, and that they intend to issue an unqualified opinion on the statements.

The Statement of Accounts includes the Authority's 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement (AGS). The AGS outlines the Authority's governance arrangements including the processes and procedures in place to enable the Authority to carry out its functions effectively, and assess the adequacy of the Authority's internal control arrangements. (These documents can be found on the MFRS website - Finance and Accounts page).

The Statement of Accounts and AGS, illustrate that business is being conducted transparently and in accordance with the law and 'that public money is being properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively'. *Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999.*

Internal Audit – 2022/23 Assessment of Authority's Internal Control Systems

The Authority procured its internal audit service under a service level agreement from Liverpool City Council and the arrangement and service was in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).

On the basis of the reviews undertaken the 2022/23 Internal Audit Report has concluded that:

"Substantial Assurance that the system of internal control in place at Merseyside Fire & Rescue accords with proper practice. This opinion is based on the individual assurance levels we have provided for each of the audit reviews undertaken during the year and includes consideration of the wider sources of assurance provided to the authority. Based on the audit work carried out in 2022/23 we are not aware of any significant control weaknesses, which impact on the Annual Governance Statement"

9. Our Future Plans

Our future plans are detailed in the Service Delivery Plan 2023-24 and Integrated Risk Management Plan 2021-24**.** We will be focused on continuing to deliver an excellent service to the residents and businesses of Merseyside with making more efficient use of the resources we have. The annual planning process for the Service Delivery Plan and Station Community Safety Plans begins in November each year, is approved by Authority in March and published on 1st April. At time of writing we are planning for the next Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) previously known as IRMP. CRMP 2024/27 will be approved and published in July 2024 following a period of consultation with the public, partners and stakeholders.

Since 2019/20 the Chief Fire Officer has received Authority Members' support to increase the frontline firefighter response and protection establishment from 620 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) to 642 FTE, plus a new fire engineer post in Protection, and an increase in the available fire appliances from 26 to 32 . The Authority plans on maintaining the frontline firefighter Full Time Equivalent (FTE) at 642 whilst investing in the Capital Infrastructure of the Authority. We continue to deliver two Firefighter training courses a year to maintain meet this commitment.

The new Long Lane, Aintree fire station alongside a state of the art Training and Development Academy and National Resilience Centre of Excellence will open in April 2024. This will allow us to expand and increase our training and become a centre of excellence for national training. We are very proud of our national coordinator role for National Resilience and for UK International Search and Rescue too

Collaboration

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 introduced a duty on all three emergency services, to collaborate on the basis of improved efficiency and/or effectiveness in taking forward the Government's commitment to enable fire and police services to work more closely together and develop the role of PCC's.

In Merseyside we are working closely with our blue light partners. Merseyside Police share our Joint Control Centre at Service Headquarters and the new fire station at Prescot. We are also delivering a number of collaborative projects and sharing information to improve services.

North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) share a number of our fire stations (Formby, Southport, Bootle and Netherton, Birkenhead and Newton le Willows) and the NWAS Hazardous Response Team (HART) are based at Croxteth Fire Station with the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Team.

Community Engagement & Communication

MFRA undertakes extensive consultation on all aspects of planning including the IRMP and changes to how we provide our services. All Integrated Risk Management Plan 2021-24 documentation is available in the Authority section of the website. Planning for the IRMP 2021/24 started during 2019 with full reports available at Authority Budget Committee on 25th February 2021 and Authority on 30th June 2021.

At time of writing we are consulting with the public around planning for the next Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) previously known as IRMP. Further consultation around proposals will take place in early 2024 and the CRMP 2024/27 will be approved and published in July 2024.

We consult with our communities at independently facilitated public consultation events in the five Merseyside council areas. Senior managers and management teams deliver briefings and consultation exercises with staff, representative bodies, Councillors, partners, stakeholders and Local Authority leaders.

Consultation and engagement with stakeholders within the community is embedded within all aspects of planning in MFRA with all relevant documentation available on the MFRA website. During the planning process we host a wide variety of consultation and engagement forums including:

- Public consultation facilitated by an independent partner organisation – Opinion Research Services (ORS). The ORS consultation Report can be found in the Authority section of the MFRA website under the Authority Budget Committee on 25th February 2021 and Authority on 30th June 2021.
- Staff consultation
- Local authority, stakeholder and strategic partner consultations
- Staff representative bodies (trade unions)

For IRMP 2021-24 consultation lasting 12 weeks was conducted to review the proposals and to seek approval. Results of this can also be found on the Fire Authority page on the MFRA website.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority wishes to continue to be provided with assurance in relation to its fire and rescue service including financial health, governance arrangements and service delivery performance. Consultation with interested parties took place during 2021 around proposals in IRMP 2021-24 to relocate Croxteth and Aintree fire stations, including the Training and Development Academy and a new National

Resilience training facility to new state of the art facilities at a site on Long Lane, Aintree. This project will complete and open in April 2024. The communities of Merseyside can be assured of the Authority's absolute commitment to continuing to deliver the best service it possibly can.

Access to Information held by Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority

Government legislation requires public sector organisations open and accountable to the public. There are primarily three key Acts of Parliament that have been put in place. These consist of-

- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UKGDPR) 2018 and Data Protection Act 2018 which require organisations to protect personal data and privacy of EU citizens including processing of personal and sensitive information.
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000, which broadens people's access to information that is held by public authorities, for example: reports, minutes of meetings etc.
- The Environmental Information Regulations which gives the public increased access to environmental information held by public authorities, for example: reports, readings, research findings etc.
- The Local Government Transparency Regulations 2014.

How to gain Access to Information held by MFRA and details of how the legislation above governs what information can be released can be found on the MFRA website link above.

Privacy Notices

We process information securely and follow the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018. We use secure methods when transferring the data and also apply appropriate retention periods. We also ensure that the data is disposed of securely when it is no longer required. The Privacy Policy and Privacy Notices can be found on the MFRA website.

Assurance Declaration

The Chair of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority and Chief Fire Officer of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service are satisfied that the Authority's financial, governance and operational assurance arrangements are adequate and operating effectively and meet the requirements detailed within the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

This Statement of Assurance is signed on behalf of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority as approved at the Authority's Policy and Resources committee on Thursday 15th December 2022.

Chair of the Fire Authority ……..
Cllr Leslie Byrom

Chief Fire Officer ……
Phil Garrigan

Glossary of Terms

CFP	Community Fire Protection or Prevention
CIPFA	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
CMI	Chartered Management Institute
COMAH	Control of Major Accident Hazard
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DEFRA	Department for Environmental, Food and Rural Affairs
DIM	Detection, Identification and Monitoring
FBU	Fire Brigades Union
FOA	Fire Officers Association
FRA	Fire and Rescue Authority
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulations
HVP	High Volume Pump
INSARAG	International Search and Rescue Advisory Group
IOSH	Institute of Occupational Safety and Health
IRMP	Integrated Risk Management Plan
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
MACC	Mobilising and Communication Centre
MDD	Mass Decontamination Disrobe
MFRA	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
MTFP	Medium Term Financial Plan
NEBOSH	National Examination Board of Safety
NOL	National Operational Learning
ORS	Opinion Research Services
PSIAS	Public Sector Internal Audit Standards
SMA	Subject Matter Adviser
SOFSA	Simple Operational Fire Safety Assessment
SOLACE	Society of Local Authority Chief Executives
UKISAR	UK International Search and Rescue Team
USAR	Urban Search and Rescue