MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

10 MAY 2022

MINUTES

Present: Cllr Paul Tweed (Chair)
Cllr Sharon Connor
Cllr Edna Finneran
Cllr Kathy Hodson
Cllr Patrick Hurley
Cllr Andrew Makinson
Cllr Gillian Wood

Also Present: ACFO Mottram

Apologies of absence were received from:
Cllr Jan Grace
Cllr Lisa Preston

1. Preliminary Matters

Members considered the identification of any declarations of interest, matters of urgency or items that would require the exclusion of the press and public due to the disclosure of exempt information.

RESOLVED that:

a) no declarations of interest were made by individual Members in relation to any item of business on the Agenda;

b) no additional items of business were determined by the Chair to be considered as matters of urgency; and

c) no items of business required the exclusion of the press and public during consideration thereof because of the possibility of the disclosure of exempt information.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on the 3rd March 2022 are an accurate record.

3. Revised Home Safety Strategy Presentation

Members considered the revised home safety strategy and were given a presentation by Area Manager, Ged Sheridan, which focused on areas of coverage, points of intervention, vulnerability factors and plans for the future.

Members were advised that Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service were the first in the country to fully return to prevention work during the pandemic and the Chair asked how this was possible. It was explained that a risk-based approach

was taken to prevention work and that during the pandemic MFRA's Chief Fire Officer was the national lead for Covid. Through work undertaken by the Strategic Business Continuity Group, an opportunity had arisen to return to prevention work as the benefits outweighed the risk at that time.

MFRA had worked closely with the Merseyside Health and Protection Board which had helped to identify the risks to Merseyside and through that, it was clear that prevention work needed to restart. The Authority's ability to maintain that level of activity throughout Covid was commended as an excellent decision for communities.

Members were advised that internal processes had been improved since prevention work recommenced, in particular a move to 'tough pads' from paper forms. It was explained that this advance in technology was allowing officers to capture risks quicker using live data and also provided more flexibility to amend and adapt the forms used in Home Fire Safety Checks.

Councillor Connor asked how the process was quality assured and was advised that Station Managers also took part to ensure that the messaging was consistent and the Authority's interactions with the public during these visits were of a high standard. The Authority also contacted members of the public after visits as part of ensuring the process was quality assured.

The Committee discussed how data was used to identify vulnerable parts of the community that may not be registered with a GP. It was acknowledged that some people could be hard to identify and it was an aspiration of the Authority to gather more data in order to refine its targeted approach.

Councillor Wood enquired as to how this information was shared with schools who could feedback the information to older relatives who may be at risk. Members were informed that it was part of Area Manager Ged Sheridan's role to engage with schools through working with the Princes Trust, Beacon Project and Cadets to get the right messages shared with families.

With regards to energy suppliers, it was explained that the Authority had good relationships with suppliers through the Local Resilience Forum and had identifies some vulnerable households with this data.

Members queried whether the Open Days that the Authority previously participated in before the pandemic would make a return as they felt there was value in different services co-hosting an event to spread awareness on these issues. It was acknowledged that Covid had forced a lot of initiatives into a hiatus and it was hoped that work could recommence.

RESOLVED that the Authority note the contents of the report and presentation.

4. Health, Safety & Welfare Annual Report 2020/21

Members received a presentation from Group Manager Craig Whitfield, which provided a breakdown of incidents across the Service during 2020/21. It was acknowledged that there had been a delay in presenting this report to the Committee but Members were assured that the 2021/22 report would be submitted to the next meeting. The work of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee was highlighted as integral to maintaining a positive Health and Safety picture and Councillor Grace was thanked for her input.

With regards to incidents relating to blue light response, it was reported that there had been 34 incidents over the period the majority of which were low speed manoeuvres that resulted in minimal damage like the clipping of a wing mirror. The Chair queried whether that kind of damage was necessary in order to get to an incident without delay and it was explained that all incidents were reviewed through the Road Risk Review Group using CCTV were possible. The incidents tended to be from making a slight misjudgement under pressure on tight streets in time critical situations.

Councillor Hurley asked how the Authority benchmarked its performance and whether there were any external targets set by central government. Craig Whitfield explained there was a multi-layered approach that the Authority used which included reviewing an internal data based on previous year's performance to make improvements. Additionally, regional data from the NFCC and national government statistics were used to benchmark against four key areas. It was explained that the Authority had performed well nationally in terms of the proportion of firefighters injuries per 1000 population, firefighter injuries at incidents, injuries during training and injuries whilst completing routine activities.

ACFO, Dave Mottram, noted that Merseyside was one of the busiest areas in terms of incidents and did more training than most other services. Therefore, the Authority's performance was even more impressive given how busy it was operationally with appliance movements and training events.

Furthermore, Members were advised that Craig Whitfield's department had been responsible for keeping staff safe during the pandemic and the Authority had some of the lowest absence figures as a result. The guidance from the Health and Safety department during the pandemic was commended. Councillor Hodson noted that the absence figures were remarkable and there were few organisations that could boast similar success.

Members welcomed the report and presentation which epitomised the robust management and culture around health and safety at the Authority. It was requested that the 2021-22 report be shared with Members as soon as possible.

RESOLVED that the Authority note the performance outcomes of the Authority against its Health, Safety and Welfare performance targets for the period April 2020 to March 2021.

5. Standing Item: Scrutiny Forward Work Plan

Members were asked to consider the Scrutiny Committee work plan for 2021/22, noting that this was the final meeting of the municipal year. It was advised that there would be a work planning session with the Members in the coming months to determine whether the remaining items would move to the 2022/23 work plan.

RESOLVED that any suggested changed to the Work Plan be communicated with Democratic Services in order to be considered during the planning for 2022-23.

Close

Date of next meeting Thursday, 8 September 2022