MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

8 SEPTEMBER 2022

MINUTES

Present: Cllr Paul Tweed (Co-chair)
Cllr Edna Finneran
Cllr Andrew Makinson
Cllr Linda Maloney
Cllr Anna Rothery
Cllr Gillian Wood
Anthony Boyle

Also Present: DCFO Nick Searle, Ria Groves, Mike Rea,

Apologies of absence were received from: Cllr Sharon Connor, Cllr Dave Hanratty, Cllr Leslie Rennie, ACFO Dave Mottram, Ian Cummins

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 required the exclusion of the press and public, due to the disclosure of exempt information:

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on the 10th May 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

3. Health, Safety & Welfare Annual Report 2021/22

Members considered the health, safety and welfare annual report and presentation by Group Manager Craig Whitfield which focused on the incidents throughout 2021/22 including injuries and road traffic collisions.

Members queried if there is a distinction in the reporting around collisions under blue lights and those incidents which may be avoidable. Members were advised that each incident is reviewed and there is a structured process in place for this. 95% of collisions while under blue lights are at a low speed however, all of the circumstances are taken into account when reviewing incidents and the data analysed in order to identify any patterns or trends which can then be addressed.

Members also queried the recording of the impact of adverse weather conditions on incidents, Group Manager Craig Whitfield clarified that while the weather conditions are reported in investigations they are not for incidents although this will be reviewed in the future.

DFCO Nick Searle advised that all employees are sent an alert email when weather is particularly bad and when weather warnings are in place which allows operational staff to make reasonable adjustments.

Members enquired how officers deal with parking issues when responding to incidents. Members were advised the Service is very proactive through its prevention department in providing the community with the relevant information however when responding to an incident crews will take reasonable actions in order to get to the incident.

Further to Members enquiring how mental health is recorded they were advised this would be undertaken by Occupational Health. however the Health and Safety department work closely with Occupational Health to ensure the relevant measures have been put in place to support staff as necessary.

Members queried if the figures in the report were comparable to other authorities. Members were informed that accidents are benchmarked nationally every October however, collisions are not collated nationally due to the substantial differences in circumstances between Fire and Rescue Services.

RESOLVED that the report and accompanying presentation be noted.

4. People Plan Actions Update

Members considered the People Plan actions update report and presentation provided by Director of People, Legal, Democratic Services and Organisational Development Nick Mernock.

Members were reminded that the People Plan approved by Members is a 3-year plan from 2021-2024.

Leadership-

Members were informed of how the newly incorporated leadership message was being embedded within the Service with training being delivered across the organisation to all staff over the last 7 months delivered by an external training provider. The training also referred to as the colours training helps people

identify how they work and breaks this down into four colours. This will be worked into the appraisal system to help those individuals in the way they work and achieve their goals.

Members were also informed of the Accelerated Development Scheme which is an ambition for the Authority to create an internal development scheme to identify high performing staff and get the best people in the roles and begin to identify future leaders in all roles.

Members were advised that officers are exploring the potential to create a "Just Culture" within the service. This is a tool to open discussions beyond appraisals and encourage staff to speak out early and help resolve any issues prior to a grievance being raised .

Equality and Diversity Implications

Members were informed that as part of equality, diversity, and inclusion there remains a focus on creating a strong and inclusive organisation and a sense of belonging.

There is a role in the People and Organisational Development team to help with Positive Action. While the candidate is yet to be recruited for this, there are currently two members of the staff network who are helping with outreach work. A post has been set up in the Equality and Diversity team in "Knowing Communities" and work has already commenced in this area. Staff networks now have their own budgets to be able to engage more in the community.

As Members were being provided with the recruitment figures for the last recruitment process in August 2022. Members were advised that the Service compares well nationally regarding equality and diversity, however there is still a strong desire to improve. Members were also advised that the Service is 1 of 5 organisations with 10% of its operational staff female. However, work continues to increase in the numbers of BAME employees.

Wellbeing Culture

Members were also informed that the wellbeing of staff is always paramount and that Occupational Health offer, who assistance to staff which includes providing internal and external councillors for mental health issues. If staff book sick with any mental health related sickness, they are provided with an appointment within 3 days. There is a capability process in place which uses support plans to support staff back into work. The Service has found persistent short-term absences are dealt with quickly and this has now created a supportive process for staff.

Members were also advised that Officers are currently reviewing and building a flexible/hybrid working process. Staff were invited to two meetings, which have now taken place and the feedback is being considered and remains ongoing while the process is being developed. The meetings have allowed staff to bring

up any concerns around flexible working and been a productive conversation with staff.

Members acknowledged the success of female and BAME candidates in previous recruitment processes however it was queried on the number of BAME females in the organisation. Members were informed that all networks are engaging with the community however the Service is receiving minimal applicants from BAME females across all roles not just operational, so it is a broad challenge for the Authority. It is the aim of the Authority to improve.

Members enquired whether more access through community clubs such a sport or school clubs to try to help applicants that are coming in regard to the physical demands of the role. It was agreed that this is being reviewed to expand the reach within the community.

Members asked for further detail on how the accelerated development scheme will work and how diversity can continue to grow within the organisation. While it was confirmed to Members the scheme is not yet in place and the criteria is being reviewed, the engagement with staff and through staff networks the Service will always continue to review its processes and better ways of working.

RESOLVED that the report and accompanying presentation be noted.

5. Standing Item: Scrutiny Forward Work Plan

Members were asked to consider the Scrutiny Committee forward work plan for 22/23.

RESOLVED that the forward workplan be noted and that any suggested changes to be communicated to the Democratic Services team to be raised at the next meeting.