Merseyside FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Statement of Assurance 2015-16



Jackie Sutton

www.merseyfire.gov.uk

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority

ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2015/16

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MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2015/16

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 Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2012 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 2015 and 31st March 2016.

The aim of this Statement of Assurance is '**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.'**

DCLG Guidance on Statements of Assurance for FRA's in England

Merseyside FRA has faced budget cuts on an unprecedented scale over a number of years. These cuts have had a significant impact on organisational capacity and have resulted in a reduction in the number of immediately available fire engines from 42 to 24 (2 additional appliances are available through recall arrangements). This has had an impact on the speed and weight of attack when responding to incidents and in the ability of the Service to maintain the levels of community safety intervention delivered over the last decade. During 2015/16, the Authority continued to work towards the merger* of fire stations in Knowsley, St Helens and Wirral. When complete, these mergers will contribute to delivering the cuts made in previous years. Further cuts between 2016/17 and 2019/20 will require further savings of £11m. Between £2m and £4m of this total will have to come from emergency response (fire appliances and firefighters). It is increasingly likely that cuts will continue beyond 2020. Whilst you should be reassured that the Service will continue to deliver a fast response to an emergency and will carry out prevention activities aimed at those people most at risk, it is an unfortunate reality that the speed of response to emergency calls (especially the speed of the second and third responding fire engine) will not be at the levels delivered prior to the cuts.

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

*Merger = closure of two fire stations, replacing them with one new fire station in an optimal location.

2. Introduction

Merseyside is a Metropolitan County 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 also a polycentric county with five metropolitan districts, each of which has at least one major town centre and outlying suburbs.

Mid 2015 estimated figures showed that Merseyside has a population total of 1,398,030. This is a 1.2% increase on 2011 census figures. The population is split 48.2% male and 51.8% female. Merseyside has a lower proportion of children (16.7%) and higher proportions of working age residents (64.8%) and a higher proportion of older people (18.5%) than North West averages. Our Profile of Merseyside Demography, Equality and Diversity report outlines the communities we serve.

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 and diversity at the forefront of our minds, ensuring we understand how our decisions affect our business, communities and the people who work for MFRA.

We have worked hard over the last few years to anticipate the impact of the cuts and reduce the effect they will have on our communities. By using natural retirement rates and reserves it has not been necessary to make any staff compulsorily redundant. However the Comprehensive Spending Review for 2016/17 was announced in late 2015 and this requires the Authority to deliver further savings of £11m between 2016/2020. Redundancy may not be avoidable in the future.

We believe that fire does discriminate against the old and infirm and those in socio-economically disadvantaged areas. We have developed policies and procedures to ensure we identify and target our efforts towards the most vulnerable and at risk within our communities.

We will continue to fit smoke alarms FREE of charge to those over 65 and those referred by other agencies who understand fire risk, or by our staff as part of specific campaigns following fatal fires or otherwise e.g. Private landlord accreditation scheme.

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 (this service is provided by volunteers on a non-profit basis).

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority actively supports the reduction of Hate Crime across Merseyside and has introduced Safe Havens at all fire stations. 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 (despite a reduction in appliance numbers) and 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 2016/17 in April 2015 and the IRMP Supplement 2015/17 in April 2015 to respond to the changing risks and needs within our communities. This is a 2 year supplement to the existing IRMP 2013/16 published to take account of the Government grant being released for 2 years (2015/17). The Service Delivery Plan establishes the standards of performance expected and reported on the 2015/16 outcomes. The Integrated Risk Management Plan sets out how we will continue to deliver our services to meet local risks. It describes a noticeably leaner but dynamic fire and rescue service 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.
Note: the Authority published its draft Integrated Risk Management Plan for 2017-20 on 24th October 2016 for twelve weeks consultation.

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 Merseyfire.gov.uk - Authority.

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
- Community Risk Intervention Service
- Local Government Association
- Liverpool City Region Brussels Office
- National Joint Council
- North West Employers' Organisation
- North West Fire and Rescue Forum
- The Toxteth Firefit Hub Charity

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
- Authority Constitution 2015-16 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 CIPFA Delivering Good Governance in Local Government. 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 National Framework for England 2012 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.

4. Overview of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service

Our Mission, Aims and Values

Our Mission; "Safer, Stronger Communities; Safe, Effective Firefighters", our aims and our values run as a golden thread through everything we do.

Our Aims

Excellent Operational Preparedness

We will provide our firefighters with the training, information, procedures and equipment to ensure they can safely and effectively resolve all emergency incidents.

Excellent Operational Response

We will maintain an excellent emergency response to meet risk across Merseyside with safety and effectiveness at its core.

Excellent Prevention and Protection

We will work with our partners and our community to protect the most vulnerable through targeted local risk reduction interventions and the robust application of our legal powers.

Excellent People

We will develop and value all our employees, respecting diversity, promoting opportunity and equality for all.

We plan our actions by embedding our **core values** into the way we deliver our services:

- Make a positive difference to our community;
- Provide an excellent and affordable service
- Everyone matters
- Respect our environment
- Our people are the best they can be.

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 Management Group as appropriate, can be found on page 42 of the MFRA Constitution 2015-16 .

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. Our aim at MFRA is to have Excellent People:

'We will develop and value all our employees, respecting diversity, promoting opportunity and equality for all'.

Staffing levels, including the number of officers, can be found on the
DCLG 2015 (Department for Communities and Local Government) and
CIPFA 2015 (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.

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. Uniformed 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 require 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.

Staff consultation - Representative Bodies

Uniformed staff are represented by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and the Fire Officers Association (FOA), non-uniformed staff by 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

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority conducted a staff survey, facilitated by an independent organisation (People Insight), between 16th June and 28th July 2014. 68% of staff took part.

Participation in the survey was more than twice that of the last employee survey despite being conducted at a difficult time for the organisation against a background of industrial action around the national

firefighter pension dispute, four years of Government cuts and the resulting reductions in the number of staff employed in recent years.

As a result of the report MFRA has developed a set of engagement principles which are being embedded across the service.

Note: A further staff survey was carried out in June 2016 with results being published in October 2016.

A summary report on the Staff Survey results provided by People Insight was considered by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority. This report, and the report for the 2016 Survey when available, summarise all of the results produced by People Insight and can be found on the MFRA website Staff Survey Results 2014 and 2016

Equality and Diversity

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 have published an Annual Equality and Diversity Report 2015/16 which sets out how we have met our legal obligations and improved outcomes for our communities.

5. 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 (IRMP Supplement 2015/17) to develop services to respond to those risks and help prevent incidents occurring. 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. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2015 indicate that 32 per cent of the super output areas (SOA's) in Merseyside are ranked in the top 10 per cent of the most deprived SOA's in England with high levels of social exclusion and crime. In addition, all the local authorities in Merseyside are within the top 20 per cent of the most income deprived in England. We

consider this when we plan our services and target those services at people we identify as most at risk. We are particularly targeting 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:

- 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 Nustar petrochemical plant.
- 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.

6. Risks beyond our borders

National & Local Resilience

Over recent years large scale emergency incidents have increased in the UK. This has been due to climate change and terrorist activities. As a direct result the Government introduced the 'National Resilience' programme.

MFRA is the lead authority for National Resilience on behalf of Home Office and 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) team, Incident Response Unit (IRU) and Mass Decontamination Disrobe unit (MDD). We also have 2 type B flood rescue teams and one Flood Tactical Advisor declared on the DEFRA national flood rescue asset register. All of these assets are available at all times for national deployment.

In 2012 MFRA extended its USAR role, becoming a member of the UK International Search and Rescue Team (UKISAR), the internationally deployable International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) heavy classified USAR team. This team is available for deployment to incidents anywhere in the world on behalf of the UK Government. The Merseyside FRS contingent formed part of the team that were successfully reclassified via INSARAG in 2016.

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 2016/17 for 2015/16 outcomes
- IRMP 2013/16 and IRMP Supplement 2015/17
- Budget Summary 2015-16
- Corporate Risk Register 2015/16

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.

Functional Business Continuity Plans have been prepared and are tested regularly.

7. 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 National Framework for England 2012
- Local Government Acts 1972 to date

The Service Delivery Plan 2016/17 highlights MFRA's commitment to delivering an excellent service to the communities of Merseyside. This document brings together actions from the IRMP 2013/16, IRMP Supplement 2015/17, Station Community Safety Delivery Plans, Functional Plans, Equality and Diversity planning and details of outcomes from 2015/16. All these plans are available to view through the MFRA Portal.

Excellent Operational Response

The Authority's priorities clearly stated in the Service Delivery Plan 2016/17 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 Third Officer who is responsible for the operational element of the MFRA workforce. This equates to approximately 950 people across the 25 Fire Stations, our Fire Control and Officer Group.

Community Risk Management

Community Risk Management incorporates the Prevention and Protection functions. The Community Risk Management function is led by an Area Manager. The team includes operational and non-operational fire safety officers, community safety advocate teams and administration support staff. Priorities for Community Safety Function are:

Excellent Prevention

- Working with partners and our community to protect the most vulnerable.
- The four key drivers for MFRA's Prevention Strategy are; Home Safety, Road Safety – Road Traffic Collision Reduction, Arson/Anti-Social Behaviour Reduction and Youth Engagement.
- The Prevention Team is led by the Area Manager for Community Risk Management. The work is led by teams in the five districts of Merseyside and each of these key areas also has a functional co-ordinator with responsibility for joining up prevention activity and improved outcomes for communities, including seasonal campaigns such as the bonfire period and community reassurance following incidents.

Excellent Protection

- Working in partnership to reduce risk in the built environment
- MFRA has duties to enforce, consult and provide fire safety advice on matters relating to Community Fire Protection. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 is most commonly associated with Fire Authority enforcement; additional relevant legislation includes sub-surface railways, petroleum, fireworks and explosives, and building regulations.
- The Community Fire Protection (CFP) Policy was refreshed in October 2013 to:
    - Provide the rationale and basis of the Authority's risk based audit approach to CFP;
    - Provide strategic direction on the extent to which fire safety legislation applies;
    - Direct resources to ensure levels of fire protection are met and enforced as required in the relevant fire safety legislation;
    - Provide overarching direction for all CFP priorities, instructions and guidance

8. Our Performance

The MFRA Service Delivery Plan 2016/17 reports on performance for 2015/16 and establishes the Key (KPI) and Local Performance Indicators (LPI's) and service delivery standards for 2016/17. Performance against the KPI's is reported to Authority in the Service Delivery Plan reports and to Strategic Management Group and the Performance Management Group (PMG) on a monthly basis.

Budget cuts have meant that we have had to become smarter about how we target our prevention and protection work. This is reflected in our planning and performance, with Home Fire Safety Checks being delivered to specifically targeted people identified as being in need of our intervention. Likewise, our Unwanted Fire Signal Strategy has contributed towards the number of incidents of this type that we attend reducing by 50% since 2011/12.

All fire stations produced and reported on a Community Safety 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 on each community fire station page on our portal.

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 illustrates the number of incidents attended by type, for an average day between 2006/07 and 2015/16. The table identifies that during 2015/16 40 incidents were attended on a daily basis against 87 during 2006/07. This reduction 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	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Accidental Fires in the Home	3.8	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.3	3.3	3.1	3.2	2.9	3.0
Other Building and Property Fires	5.8	4.8	4.2	3.9	3.3	3.2	2.5	2.3	2.1	2.8
Vehicle Fires	5.4	4.2	3.7	3.3	2.6	2.2	2.0	1.8	1.9	1.4
All Antisocial Behaviour Fires	36.8	29.6	22.9	21.9	20.7	18.6	11.8	15.8	12.0	12.5
False Automatic Fire Alarms	14.7	15.0	16.6	16.3	16.2	15.3	12.5	7.5	7.7	7.9
Other False Alarms	9.9	8.7	7.4	6.8	5.7	5.0	4.7	4.5	4.4	4.8
Road Traffic Collisions	2.5	2.1	2.0	1.8	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.6	1.5
Other Special Services	7.8	6.6	6.0	5.5	5.9	5.3	5.3	5.6	5.6	6.0
Grand Total	86.7	74.5	66.3	63.1	59.2	54.2	43.0	42.0	38.2	39.9

What others have said about our performance?

'Merseyside have been key contributors to the content of National Operational Guidance and are well advanced in integration of the content into their policies, operational tactics and standard operational procedures. We're looking forward to a continuing strong relationship and welcome you continuing to share your work with us and with others.'

Nick Collins – Head of Programme – National Operational Guidance

From the Institute of Fire Engineers (IFE) regarding our application to become an awarding centre for an IFE qualification:

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service have been successful in becoming an accredited centre for the IFE Level 3 Certificate for Operational Supervisory Managers in Fire and Rescue Services. In doing so you have become only the 2nd Service in the UK with this status.

Your application portfolio demonstrated a commitment to ensuring suitably competent personnel were assigned with the responsibility of undertaking operational command assessments and provided clear evidence of having resilience within a cohort of 15 officers. Your assessor team not only has the appropriate qualifications and technical knowledge, but a more than suitable level of experience that we would seek in personnel tasked with assessing others.

We are pleased to inform you that you have become the first Fire and Rescue Service to formally register candidates for this award and we look forward to a long standing successful relationship in years to come.

From Charlotte Bailey, Executive Director at Sefton Council regarding Prevention Team work:

Merseyside fire service have played a critical and invaluable role to the shaping and implementation of the welfare reform anti-poverty agenda for Sefton. They have been an active partner stimulating activity as well as influencing direction. Welfare reform and anti-poverty is about supporting our most vulnerable people across Sefton, who may at times find themselves in need of help and support. What we do together across Sefton to reduce poverty and mitigate the impacts of welfare reform make a difference to people's lives and the fire service have really played a key role in this over the last 12 months. The fire service have also helped us move the agenda into early action; so it's no longer just about responding to crisis but about early intervention, pre-empting problems even before they even start.

Gail Porter - Programme Director, Office of the Chief Executive, Liverpool City Council

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS) are longstanding members of Liverpool's Families Strategic Group, the governance arrangement which oversees the delivery of the city's response to the national Troubled Families Programme.

Through representation on the group, MRFS have helped to deliver against the strategic priorities for the Families Programme. In particular they have contributed to:

- Prevention and early intervention, using an intelligence-led approach to target our resources and opportunities effectively;
- Better coordination of public sector service planning and investment to improve outcomes and value for money.

Their participation in, and contribution to, partnership working across the city and the wider Merseyside area is recognised and appreciated.

The following is from Mr David Rutley MP (Macclesfield) regarding our response to the Bosley Wood Flour Mill incident in Cheshire:

I am writing to thank you and all those in your organisation who have been involved in tackling the devastating explosion in Bosley.

I know that all your hard work and commitment to this important task has been greatly appreciated by those who have sadly lost loved ones in this tragic event, by those who were injured and by the employees and owners of the company, as well as many local residents in Bosley.

The response to the explosion from the emergency services has been exceptional. Having seen first-hand the site on the evening of the incident, I was very impressed by the fast and coordinated action from services based in Cheshire and those from further afield.

All those involved in the multi-agency approach have shown real courage and professionalism in the way that they tackled this major incident, and have continued to demonstrate their dedicated service in the weeks that have followed.

I hope that the tasks of completing the recovery, making the site safe and the ongoing investigation into the cause of the tragic explosion go well.

Once again, I cannot thank you enough for all that you have done in response to this tragic incident.

With best wishes,

David Rutley MP

PS thank you once again for all your hard work + dedicated service at the Bosley Site.

'MFRS leadership had the foresight and opportunity to get involved early in the NOGP. This has clearly helped the policy team not only to understand but to embrace, adopt and adapt the framework methodology to audit and review their own local doctrine.

By applying the hazard and control measure methodology they have developed a refined SOP framework which focuses on information firefighters need in the operational environment.

Change is never easy but should be constant if we are truly passionate about operational improvement and applying robust H&S management protocols but lasting change will only be delivered with the vision and leadership demonstrated by John, Brian and the MFRS policy team.'

Lee Drawbridge – Programme Senior Supplier – National Operational Guidance

9. Financial Performance

In accordance with the statutory requirement under the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 MFRA published a Statement of Accounts 2015-16 and Annual Governance Statement 2015-16 to 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

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).

The Annual Review of Internal Audit Report concluded that:

Internal Audit works to a risk based audit plan. The plan is designed to give reasonable assurance that controls are in place and working effectively. From the Internal Audit work undertaken in compliance with the PSIAS in 2015/16, it is our opinion that we can provide **Substantial Assurance** that the system of internal control in place at Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service for the year ended 31st March 2016 accords with proper practice.

External Audit

External audit services are carried out by the Grant Thornton.

Grant Thornton's 2015/16 Audit Findings Report and Audit Report provided an unqualified opinion on the Authority's financial statements and value for money conclusion. These documents reflect the Auditor's findings and conclusions from auditing the Statement of Accounts.

The Statement of Accounts 2015-16, Annual Governance Statement 2015-16 and External Audit Findings Report 2015-16 are available on the MFRA website. The documents confirm the Authority's overall performance continues to be strong.

Our budget for 2016/17

This Fire and Rescue Authority has suffered the largest cut in Government grant of any fire and rescue service in the country – over 35% between 2010/11 and 2015/16. The Government has imposed further significant grant cuts between 2016/17 and 2019/20, which in real terms means that the Authority faces a further 50% reduction in grant funding. This presents the Authority with significant challenges as it seeks to minimise the impact on the levels of service provided to the public. A summary of the budget challenges and plans for 2016/17 is available in both the Service Delivery Plan 2016/17, IRMP Supplement 2015/17 and Draft IRMP 2017-20 which is in a 12 week consultation period until January 2017.

Financial Management

The Authority produces a five year financial plan that takes into account Revenue, Capital, Reserves and Prudential Borrowing forecasts. In February 2016 a budget was agreed for 2016/17 and it was agreed to accept a four year local government settlement and the financial plan was agreed. A summary is available on the MFRA website Budget and Financial Plan 2015/16-2019/20

Our long term financial challenges and commitments

The Authority is seriously concerned about Government's future requirements to balance the books and the possible impacts on MFRA funding The Authority have prepared a comprehensive plan to deliver these savings including merging fire stations, changes to work patterns/shifts to match resources to demand and further savings from support staff and non-employee expenditure.

10. Our Future Plans

Our future plans are detailed in the IRMP Supplement 2015/17 , draft IRMP 2017-20 (due for publication in February 2017) and Service Delivery Plan 2016/17. We will be focused on continuing to deliver an excellent service to the residents and businesses of Merseyside with fewer resources, making more efficient use of resources we have. The annual planning process for the Service Delivery Plan and Community Safety Plans begins in November, approved by Authority and published on 1st April.

The Authority have prepared a plan for savings of £11m for the years 2016-2020 as a result of the latest budget cuts. The Authority has planned prudently to minimise the impact on frontline services and has assumed significant efficiency savings of £6m by reducing management and support service costs. The Authority has benefitted from a known £1m increase in the council tax base and the financial plan assumes this increase is permanent. Despite these efficiencies which have identified £7m savings, an unavoidable saving of up to £4m must still be found from operational response. MFRA are undertaking 12 weeks consultation (until 17th January 2017) on proposed changes contained with our Draft IRMP 2017-2020.

Station mergers have been approved by the Authority in three Districts. All three mergers are at different stages with work about to commence at Prescot (merging Huyton and Whiston fire stations), planning permission is being sought at Saughall Massie on Wirral (Upton and West Kirby) and agreement on a site in St Helens (St Helens and Eccleston) is progressing.

Collaboration

The Policing and Crime Bill will introduce 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 already working closely with our blue light partners. Merseyside Police share our Joint Control Centre at Service Headquarters and have plans to share a number of fire stations including Formby, Heswall and the new station at Prescot. We are also exploring ways of sharing transactional corporate services with the Police.

North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) share a number of our fire stations (Formby, Southport, Bootle and Netherton, Birkenhead and Newton le Willows) and we have piloted a response to Emergency Medical (Cardiac Arrest) incidents alongside the Ambulance Service. 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 relevant IRMP Supplement 2015/17 documentation is available in the Authority section - Authority Budget Committee on 26th February 2015.

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

Consultation with stakeholders within the community is embedded within all aspects of planning in MF&RA with all relevant documentation available on the MFRA website and in the IRMP 2013/16 and IRMP Supplement 2015/17. During 2014/15 we undertook extensive consultations regarding the merger and closure of fire stations. During this process we host a wide variety of consultation and engagement forums including:

- Public consultation facilitated by an independent partner organisation – ORS Consultation Report 2015
- Staff consultation
- Local authority and strategic partner consultations
- Staff representative bodies (trade unions)
- Consultation on specific issues such as station closures.

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. It will be necessary in 2016/17 to consult further with all interested parties and make difficult decisions around service delivery. However 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 has been introduced to make public sector organisations more open and accountable to the public. There are primarily three key Acts of Parliament that have been put in place. These consist of:-

- The Data Protection Act 1998 which allows people to have access to their personal information that is held by the Authority.
- 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.

Privacy Notice

We process information securely and follow the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998. 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 can be found on the MFRA website.

Authorisation

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 2016.

Councillor Dave Hanratty.
Chair of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority

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
HVP	High Volume Pump
INSARAG	International Search and Rescue Advisory Group
IOSH	Institute of Occupational Safety and Health
IRMP	Integrated Risk Management Plan
MACC	Mobilising and Communication Centre
MDD	Mass Decontamination Disrobe
MFRA	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
NEBOSH	National Examination Board of Safety
PSIAS	Public Sector Internal Audit Standards
SMA	Subject Matter Adviser
SOLACE	Society of Local Authority Chief Executives
UKISAR	UK International Search and Rescue Team
USAR	Urban Search and Rescue