

AGENDA ITEM:

REPORT TO: Meeting of the	MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE BUDGET AUTHORITY
DATE:	THURSDAY 27th JUNE 2013
REPORT NO.	CFO/074/13
REPORTING OFFICER:	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
CONTACT OFFICER:	DEB APPLETON, DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC PLANNING. EXT. 4402
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	JACKIE SUTTON, IRMP OFFICER. EXT. 4653
SUBJECT:	POST CONSULTATION REPORT IRMP 2013-16

APPENDIX	(A)	TITLE	IRMP 2013/16
	(B)		Opinion Research Services consultation forums Report
	(C)		Web site survey report
	(D)		Summary of District Consultations
	(E)		FBU – “Preliminary observations to MFRA IRMP 2013/16”
	(F)		Consultation Issues Log
	(G)		Equality Impact Assessment
	(H)		Log of changes made to the IRMP
	(I)		UNISON Final Position Statement
	(J)		FOA Final Position Statement
	(K)		GMB Final Position requests
	(L)		UNITE Final Position request

ATTACHED –HARD COPYPurpose of Report

1. To report the outcomes of public consultation on the 2013-16 Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and to seek approval for the publication of the final post-consultation version of the IRMP 2013/16.

Recommendation

2. That Members;

(a) consider whether the responses to consultation have been adequately considered and are reflected within the Integrated Risk Management Plan 2013/16, where appropriate.

(b) approve the Integrated Risk Management Plan 2013/16 for publication on 27th June 2013 noting, with any amendments arising from above, in particular, that it reflects its challenging budget position and that in order to balance the books (despite maximising the savings from back office and support services and having a council, tax increase) that £3m in cuts still had to be identified from front line services. Therefore the IRMP reflects a fundamental review of fire cover undertaken by the Chief Fire Officer that will deliver a cut of £3m the key points following consultation that members are approving are :-

- A reduction of 90 fire-fighter posts
- Keeping all our fire stations open at present
- There will be a 33% cut in the number of fire appliances immediately available from 42 to 28.
- We are introducing a standard response time standard across Merseyside of 10 minutes (on average the first response to an incident will be much faster)

(c) Reaffirm their commitment to ensuring that the impact of the changes on the communities of Merseyside should be minimised and firefighter safety maximised, noting that the IRMP makes reference to four specific issues that will have significant impact upon our staff. In line with all staffing matters these are the subject of additional staff consultation/negotiation. Prior to any implementation (and in line with normal practice) the Authority expects the Chief Fire Officer to exercise his full delegated responsibility for completing those consultations/negotiations and managing the implementation of the new fire cover model, in order to deliver the savings and efficiencies in a timely manner and in a way that minimises risk. The Authority further notes that many of the changes proposed may be challenging for staff, which may mean that it is difficult to reach agreement.

The Authority expects the CFO to consider the appropriateness of the resolution process, as set out in the grey book, and indeed the full range of processes available to the Authority, as employer, in order to achieve the required outcomes.

Request the Chief Fire Officer to report back on the outcomes from the detailed consultations on all these matters as appropriate.

Executive Summary

Attached to this report is the statutorily required Integrated Risk Management Plan 2013/16 (including the annual Action Plan). This document has been developed as a result of collaboration and contribution from all functions within Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority and has been amended to reflect the outcomes of twelve weeks of consultation with the public, staff, representative bodies and other stakeholders.

Members will recall that the IRMP reflects the difficult decisions taken by the Authority in order to balance the budget in light of very significant grant reductions. The Authority's funding is being cut by 8.7% and 7.5% respectively in 2013/14 and 2014/15. Over the next two years the Fire Authority has had to plan to make savings of £10m to balance the financial plan despite increasing Council Tax by 2%.

In order to balance the books the Authority maximised the savings from back office and support services and was able to identify £7m of the required £10m savings from those areas.

Despite the efficiencies this still left £3m in cuts to be identified from front line services

The IRMP reflects a fundamental review of fire cover undertaken by the Chief Fire Officer that will deliver a cut of £3m. The key points following consultation that members are approving are :-

- A reduction of 90 fire-fighter posts
- Keep all our fire stations open at present
- There will be a 33% cut in the number of fire appliances immediately available from 42 to 28.
- We are introducing a standard response time standard across Merseyside of 10 minutes (on Average the first response to an incident will be much faster)

This version of the IRMP shows amendments in Tracked Changes, for Members' reference, as a result the formatting has been affected, this will be resolved before publication.

Subject to Authority approval any changes to the IRMP will also be added to the final Service Delivery Plan for 2013/14 (where appropriate). The final Service Delivery Plan is also on the agenda for this meeting.

The full IRMP document will be published via the internet on 27th June 2013.

Introduction & Background

3. It is a statutory requirement of the Fire & Rescue Service National Framework 2012 to produce an IRMP and Action Plan. This document has been written to ensure compliance with this new National Framework published in July 2012.

Members will recall that the IRMP reflects the difficult decisions taken by the Authority in order to balance the budget in light of very significant grant reductions. The Authority's funding is being cut by 8.7% and 7.5% respectively in 2013/14 and 2014/15. Over the next two years the Fire Authority has had to plan to make savings of £10m to balance the financial plan despite increasing Council Tax by 2%.

In order to balance the books the Authority maximised the savings from back office and support services and was able to identify £7m of the required £10m savings from those areas. Despite the efficiencies this still left £3m in cuts to be identified from front line services

The IRMP reflects a fundamental review of fire cover undertaken by the Chief Fire Officer that will deliver a cut of £3m. The key points following consultation that members are approving are :-

- A reduction of 90 fire-fighter posts
- Keep all our fire stations open at present
- There will be a 33% cut in the number of fire appliances immediately available from 42 to 28.
- We are introducing a standard response time standard across Merseyside of 10 minutes (on Average the first response to an incident will be much faster)

The IRMP, like the financial plan, recognises that It will take over three years to deliver these front line savings from natural turnover of firefighting staff through retirement. Members should also note that the Government has given notice that it expects to continue cutting public spending until at least 2017.

Results of Consultation

4. Since the draft IRMP was approved by the Authority at its Budget Meeting in February a twelve week consultation process has taken place and the outcomes from this are summarised below and reported within Appendix A IRMP 2013/16 document, pages 69 and 71 and other associated Appendices.

5. The consultation process included the following:
 - a) Five District consultation forums
 - b) Distribution of the IRMP to over 160 strategic partners and other interested parties.
 - c) Meetings with staff Representative Bodies – Fire Brigades Union, Fire Officers Association, UNISON and UNITE. (The GMB did not respond).
 - d) District Managers meeting Local Authorities and partners
 - e) An on line survey on our website for the public and staff

6. The outcomes from that process are summarised in the IRMP pages 69 to 71 and the full details are provided in the Appendices to this report. Although there have been changes made to the IRMP as a result of the consultation process, this has not materially affected the proposals contained within the Plan.

7. In general, the public consultation to the IRMP (which included some individual staff responses) was supportive of the proposals; understanding that they were driven by necessity due to the budget cuts. The outcomes from the consultation would suggest that the public were reassured that the Authority, whilst not wanting to make many of the proposed changes, had carefully considered the associated risk to our communities and were satisfied that MFRA would strive to keep any impact on service delivery to a minimum.

8. Consultation with representative bodies had a slightly different outcome. Whilst being supportive on some aspects of the IRMP; for example, the approach to Site Specific Risk Inspection and Safe Person Assessments, the Fire Brigades Union did not support the changes to fire cover, but were not able to provide any viable alternatives that would enable the Authority to deliver a balanced budget. Other representative bodies were more accepting of the proposals and understood the financial drivers, but had questions and issues that are detailed in the Issues Log at Appendix F and in some cases they were also awaiting the outcome of more specific consultations on the detail of the implementation of the IRMP (see paragraph 9).

9. It should be noted in order to minimise the impact on services to the community and to ensure firefighter safety the Authority recognises that in light of the capacity reductions it is essential that there are changes to the way in which we work as an organisation. It should be noted that the IRMP that members are approving makes reference to four specific issues that , whilst internal to the organisation, will have significant impacts upon our staff. In line with all staffing matters these are the subject of additional staff consultation/negotiation prior to any implementation. These are:
 - Changes to the current duty system and work routines to maximise productivity, efficiency and firefighter safety,

- Reductions in the current number of Low Level of Activity and Risk stations (from seven to four).
- Revision of the current staffing model to reflect the changes contained within the 2013-16 IRMP.
- Introduction of a Retained Reserve to offer resilience during large or protracted incidents.

In line with normal Authority management arrangements and the specific budget resolution of the Authority (26th February 2013) the Authority will note that the Chief Fire Officer has full delegated responsibility for completing those consultations/ negotiations and managing the implementation of the new fire cover model in order to deliver the savings and efficiencies in a timely and in a way that minimises risk.

It is recognised that that many of the changes proposed may be challenging for staff particularly those long conditioned to historic work patterns and shift routines. This may mean that agreement may not be reached with all representative bodies and the CFO will need to consider the appropriateness of the resolution processes as set out in the grey book and indeed the full range of processes available to the Authority as employer in order to achieve the required outcome.

The outcomes from the detailed consultations on all these matters will be reported back to the Authority at a later date in line with normal practice.

Equality & Diversity Implications

10. The IRMP for 2013/16 contains the five year Equality Objectives included in the previous 2012/15 IRMP which were drawn up to meet our statutory responsibility under The Equality Act 2010. These objectives, rather than standing alone, focus on our core activities.
11. The IRMP has undergone an assessment to establish any Equality and Diversity outcomes and actions. The equality impact assessment was considered by the Authority at its budget meeting but is attached at Appendix G for information. Members will recall that it details the impact of years 3 and 4 of the spending review including reports on the:
 - IRMP 2013-15 proposals
 - Support Service Review
 - Budget Implications of Council Tax Rise proposals
12. Our plans will also consider the best ways to engage with different communities and individuals to ensure that all emergencies receive the same high level response. We will also take into account the implications of our plans for different communities and individuals, including our staff.

13. An Equality Impact Assessment will also be completed for actions within the plan prior to implementation.
14. The proposed changes to the IRMP do not require any changes to the original Equality Impact Assessment.

Staff Implications

15. The IRMP does have implications for staff in relation to the support service review, reducing the number of fire appliances and firefighters, changes to duty system and work routines. Any implications arising from the actions detailed in this report will be declared and dealt with as part of the delivery of these individual actions (as outlined in paragraph 9).

Legal Implications

16. This Report is the last stage of the process to fully discharge statutory duties placed upon the Fire and Rescue Authority to produce and publish an IRMP and Action Plan as required by the Fire and Rescue National Framework 2012.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

17. The full financial implications were established during the development of the IRMP proposals which have been designed to meet the cuts in Government Grant. No alternative proposals were suggested during the consultation period that would still allow the Authority to meet their obligation to set a balanced budget.
18. Members should note that the financial section of the IRMP has been updated following the approval of the Authority's budget to ensure that it properly reflects the Authority's decision and to reflect comments made by Members at the Community Safety and Protection Committee on 28th March 2013.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

19. This document details the strategic approach to risk management, encompassing what has been done to manage risk and what will be done in the coming three years.

Contribution to Our Mission – To Achieve; Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Firefighters”

20. The Integrated Risk Management Plan is the key document by which Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority to manage its resources with full consideration of the impact on risk to life for the people of Merseyside. This document details the actions we intend to take to achieve our Mission.

