

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

24 MARCH 2016

MINUTES

Present: Cllr Leslie T. Byrom CBE (Chair) Councillors Peter Brennan, Roy Gladden, Denise Roberts, Sharon Sullivan, Lesley Rennie and Dave Hanratty

Also Present:

Apologies of absence were received from:
Ray Halpin and Jean Stapleton

8. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENT

Prior to the start of the meeting, information regarding general housekeeping was provided by the Chair to all in attendance.

The Chair confirmed to all present that the proceedings of the meeting would be filmed and requested that any members of the public present who objected to being filmed, make themselves known.

No members of the public voiced any objection therefore the meeting was declared open and recording commenced.

1. Preliminary Matters

Members considered the identification of declarations of interest, any urgent additional items, and any business that may require the exclusion of the press and public.

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 to be considered as matters of urgency were determined by the Chair; and
- c) the following item of business required the exclusion of the press and public during consideration thereof because of the possibility of the disclosure of exempt information:
 - **Agenda Item 7 – “PFI Contract – Market Testing of Cleaning Services”**

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, held on 17th September 2015, were approved as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

3. SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2016-17

Members considered Report CFO/017/16 of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, concerning the Service Delivery Plan and Station Community Risk Management Plans for 2016/17.

Members were informed that the Annual Service Delivery Plan brings together in one document, the Annual IRMP Medium Term Objectives; Functional Plan Actions; Equality Objectives; Station Community Risk Management Plans and Performance Indicators.

Members were advised that following a move from a District based delivery model, to a functional based delivery model, local Community Risk Management Plans for each station are now produced. This process has enabled plans and target outcomes to be set, which are reflective of each specific area in terms of risk and vulnerability.

Discussion took place regarding the increase in fire deaths with questions raised around the recent deaths in West Kirby, Wirral; and likely response times had West Kirby Fire Station been operational.

Members were informed of the approximated response times that could be expected from the West Kirby and the actual response time from Upton and how that would compare with the proposed new build Fire Station at Saughall Massie; Members noted how this represents a clear consideration when recommending a merged station in Wirral.

Members were further informed of dialogue with civil servants to try to understand why the number of fire deaths has increased significantly, despite the number of accidental dwelling fires remaining constant. They were also informed of work currently underway to revise and refresh the Home Safety Strategy, to ensure that limited resources are targeted towards those who are most vulnerable.

Members Resolved that:

The attached Service Delivery Plan for 2016/17, be approved for publication on the Authority's website.

4. Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme

Members considered Report CFO/014/16 of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, concerning an update on the progress of the Emergency Services Network (ESN), which is being introduced through the Emergency Services Mobile Communication Platform (ESMCP) Project.

Members were provided with an overview of the report, detailing the ESMCP, which is hosted by UK Home Office and is a cross government programme to replace the existing mobile communications services for the three emergency services, based on 4G technology. Members were informed that the current contract between Airwave and DCLG is due for review and as such a procurement exercise has been undertaken.

The overview highlighted that although DCLG accept that it is the responsibility of each individual Authority to ensure they have suitable fire communications systems in place, the Government are responsible for ensuring that the Country is fully prepared to deal with civil contingency issues. As, such, although they cannot instruct authorities to take up the ESMCP, the Government are strongly recommending that authorities do take up the ESMCP due to the financial and operational benefits.

Members were informed that the Chief Fire Officer has provided formal notification of the Authority's intention to transfer to the ESN, with the North West (including Merseyside) being the first region to transfer.

Members Resolved that:

The contents of the report and the wider implications of the ESMCP as detailed within the appendices to the report, be noted.

5. Business Rates Retention - Liverpool City Region Pilot

Members considered Report CFO/026/16 of the Treasurer, concerning acceptance from the Liverpool City Region of an offer from Government to pilot a scheme to develop the arrangements for local government funding based on a system of 100% Business Rates retention.

Members were provided with an overview of the report, which detailed the current local government finance system, in which local authorities receive up to 50% of business rates, with 49% of this income being retained by the billing authorities and 1% provided to the Fire & Rescue Authority, with a "top up" grant from Government provided where the level of income falls below a "baseline" figure.

The overview highlighted that DCLG have invited the Liverpool City Region to participate in a pilot to develop arrangements for a funding system for local authorities based on 100% Business Rates retention. It was stressed to Members that by participating in the pilot, MFRA **would not** be worse off financially.

Members Resolved that:

- a) The Terms of Agreement, attached at Appendix A, be noted.
- b) The Authority's participation in the City Region's 100% Business Rates retention scheme, be noted.
- c) Assurance provided by Government that by participating in the pilot scheme the Authority will **not be any worse off financially** than it was under the four-year funding position announced in the 2016/17 Local Government Finance Settlement, be noted.

6. Introduction of the Living Wage

Members considered Report CFO/018/16 of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, concerning the implications of introducing the National Living Wage with effect from 1st April 2016.

Members were provided with an overview of the report, which outlined the difference between the Rowntree Living Wage, which Members have considered previously; and the Government introduced National Living Wage.

Members were reminded that when they considered the introduction of the Rowntree Living Wage previously, due to budget cuts and other issues such as the risk of salary grade erosion, Members decided to wait and reconsider their position in the future.

Members were informed that the Government introduction of the National Living Wage for all employees over the age of 25, could create potential age discrimination issues, therefore it is proposed to introduce this by grade not age, as other organisations have done.

Members were further informed that when the National Living Wage is introduced from 1st April 2016, there will be criminal sanctions for non-compliance, however due to the length of the working week within MFRA, there will be no additional cost to the Authority in 2016/17 as a result of its implementation.

Members Resolved that:

- a) The requirements placed on the Authority in relation to the implementation of the National Living Wage, be noted.
- b) The application of the payments to all employees within the effected spinal column points as opposed to paying on an age related basis, be approved.
- c) Officers be requested to provide a further report advising of the financial impact in 2017, detailing the application of payments to all employees.

7. **PFI Contract - Market Testing of Cleaning Services**

This Minute contains EXEMPT information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Close

Date of next meeting Thursday, 28 July 2016

Signed: _____

Date: _____