

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

A STRATEGIC OVERVIEW OF ESTATES

IDENTIFICATION OF KEY PRIORITIES



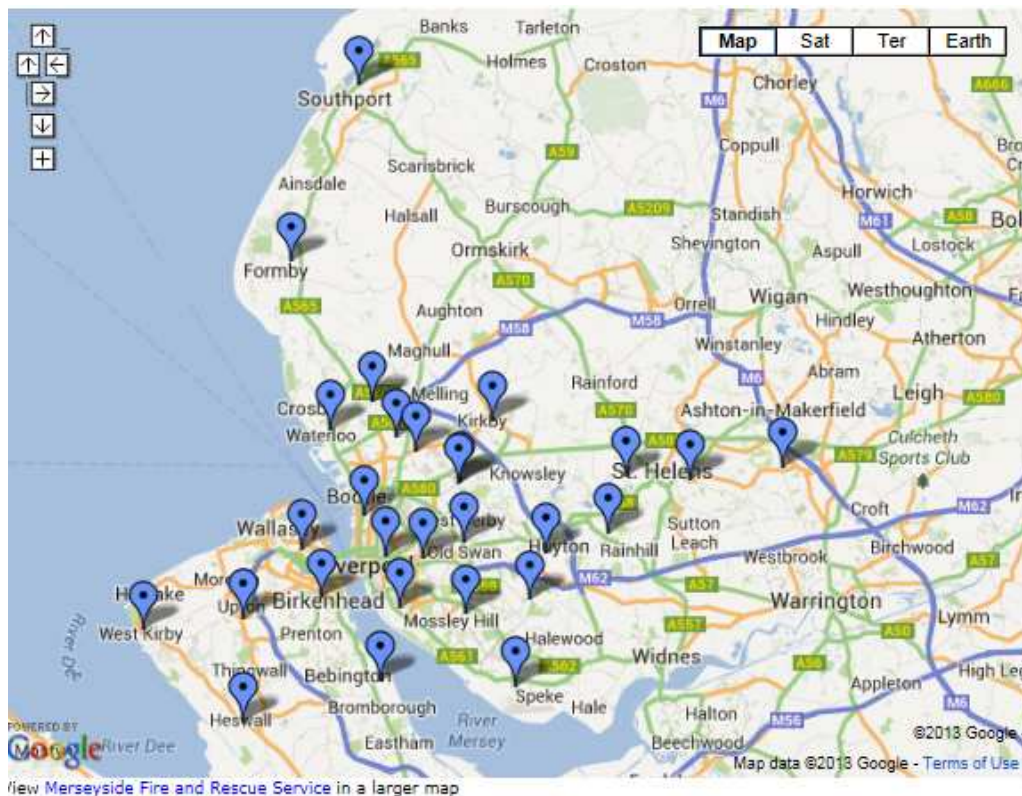
Review of Current Estates Assets

This report will focus on the key strategic issues for policy makers.

The Authority currently has 32 main buildings

- 26 Fire Stations
- A marine rescue station
- Training & Development Academy at Croxteth
- Control Room
- HQ
- Workshops and associated building
- And also some LLAR properties

The location of the fire stations is shown in the map below:-



The review will assess those properties and in particular the fire stations under the following key headings:-

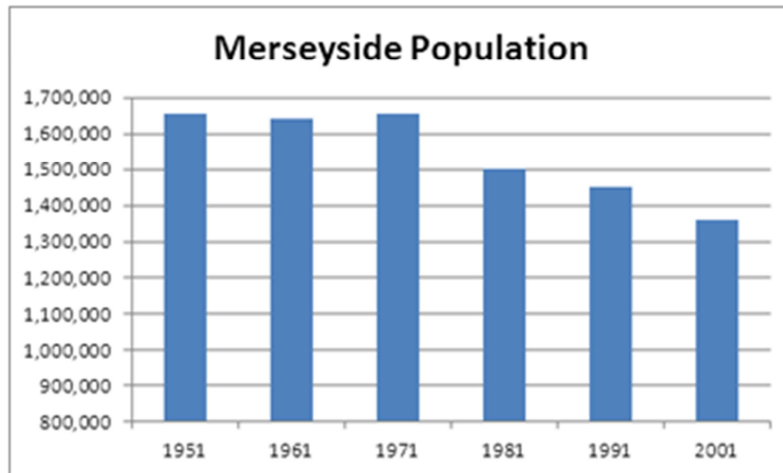
- a) Locations and Community Risk
- b) Comparison with Other Fire and Rescue Services
- c) Building Condition
- d) Operational Response
- e) Fire Stations as Community Hubs
- f) Financial Implications

At the end of each section there will be conclusions drawn. These will be amalgamated together at the end of the report and recommendations made in light of those conclusions.

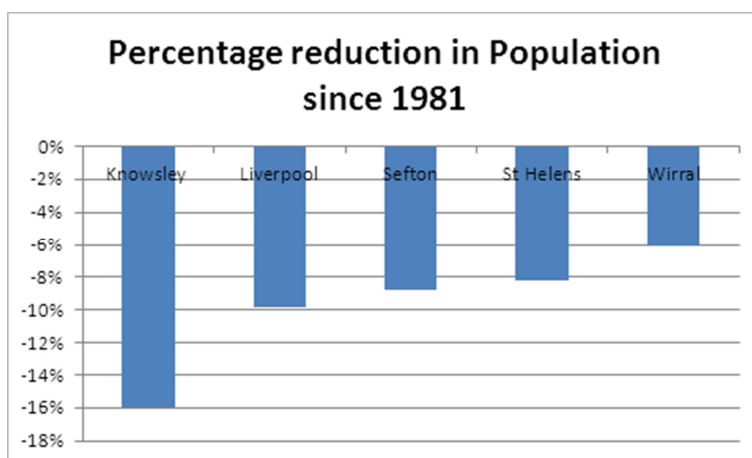
The recommendations are summarised in an action plan for building priorities across the next two years.

A) Location and Community Risk

The current location of stations remains broadly the same as that which was in place under historic standards of fire cover (the Riversdale standards) in the 1950's. However, since that time much has changed in Merseyside in particular the population has reduced significantly from about 1.65million in 1951 to current levels of about 1.35 million around a 20% reduction:-

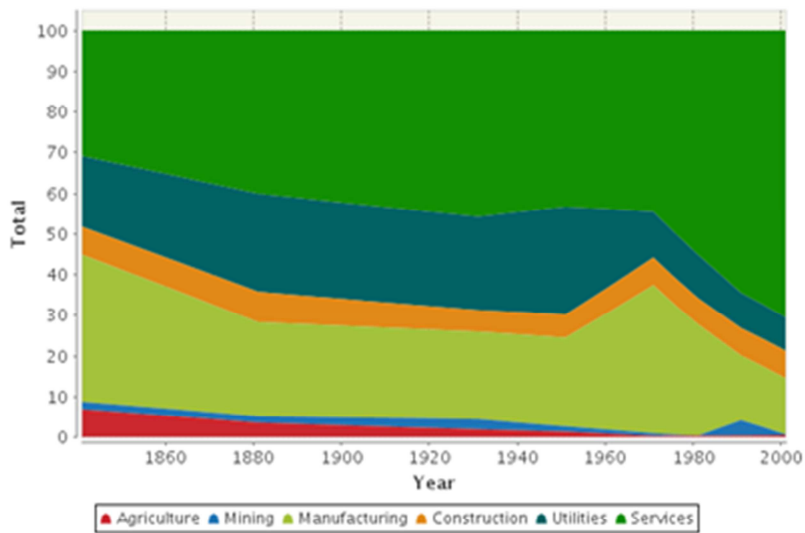


Despite a recent upturn in population, this is at odds with the pattern in most of the country and even recent increases remain below national growth levels. Because fire service funding is primarily founded on population numbers (since this is where risk is perceived to lie) this in significant part explains the funding pressures for the authority across the last decade. This pattern is common across all areas of Merseyside:-



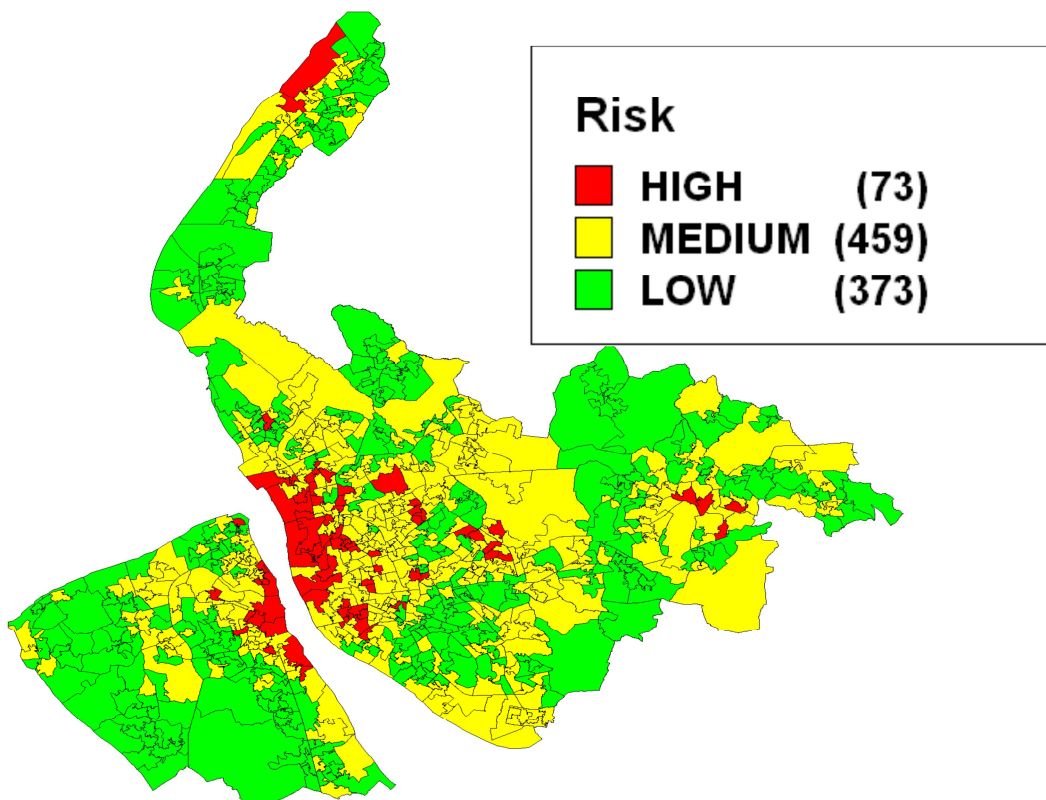
At the same time patterns in industry have seen a shift within Merseyside away from manufacturing towards a more service based economy.

Merseyside Industry

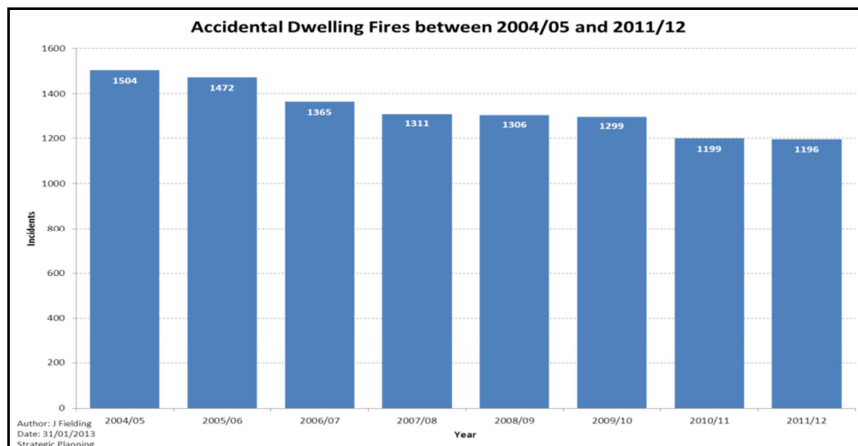
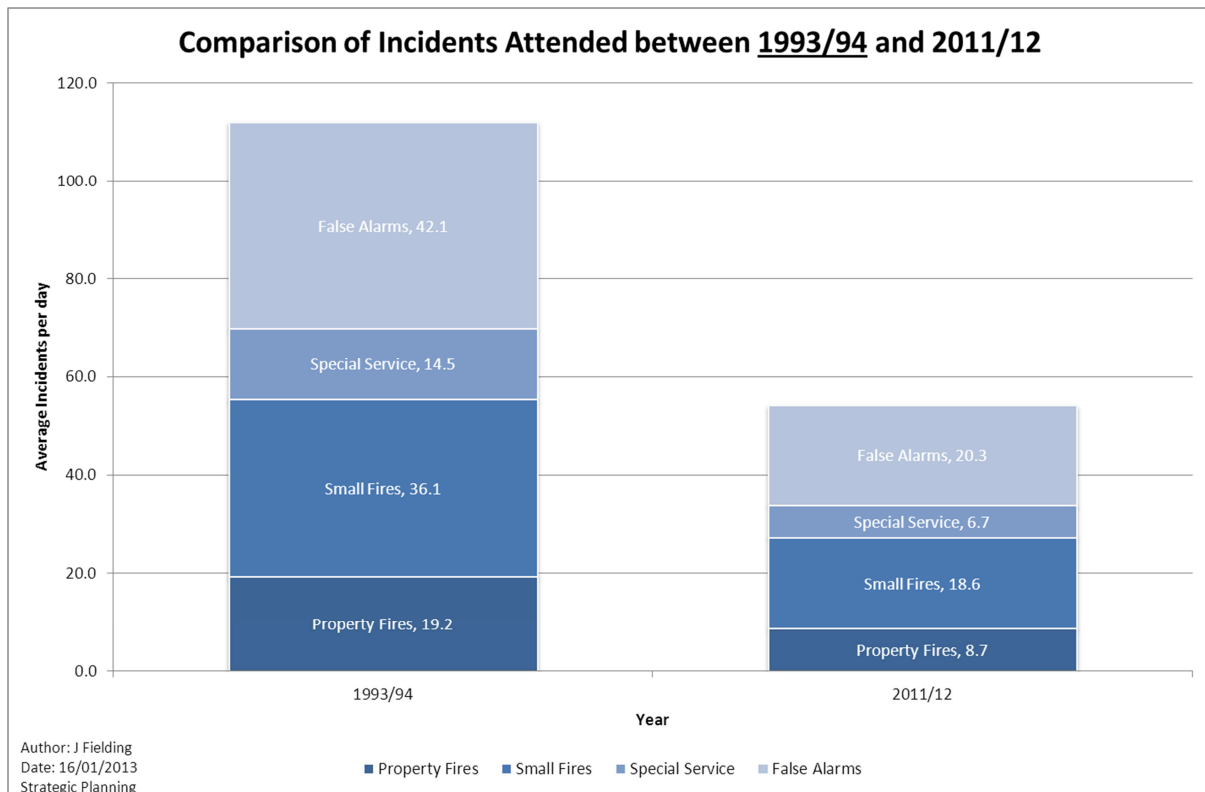


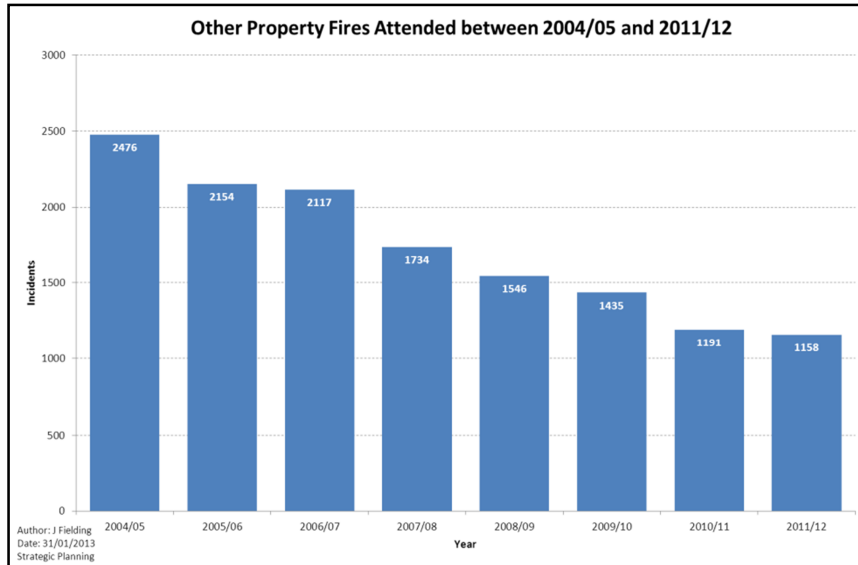
Across time those changes, in conjunction with a shift in focus by the Authority to preventative work, has seen an overall huge reduction in the number of incidents and in the risk pattern across Merseyside.

The current risk pattern across Merseyside is shown in the map below:-

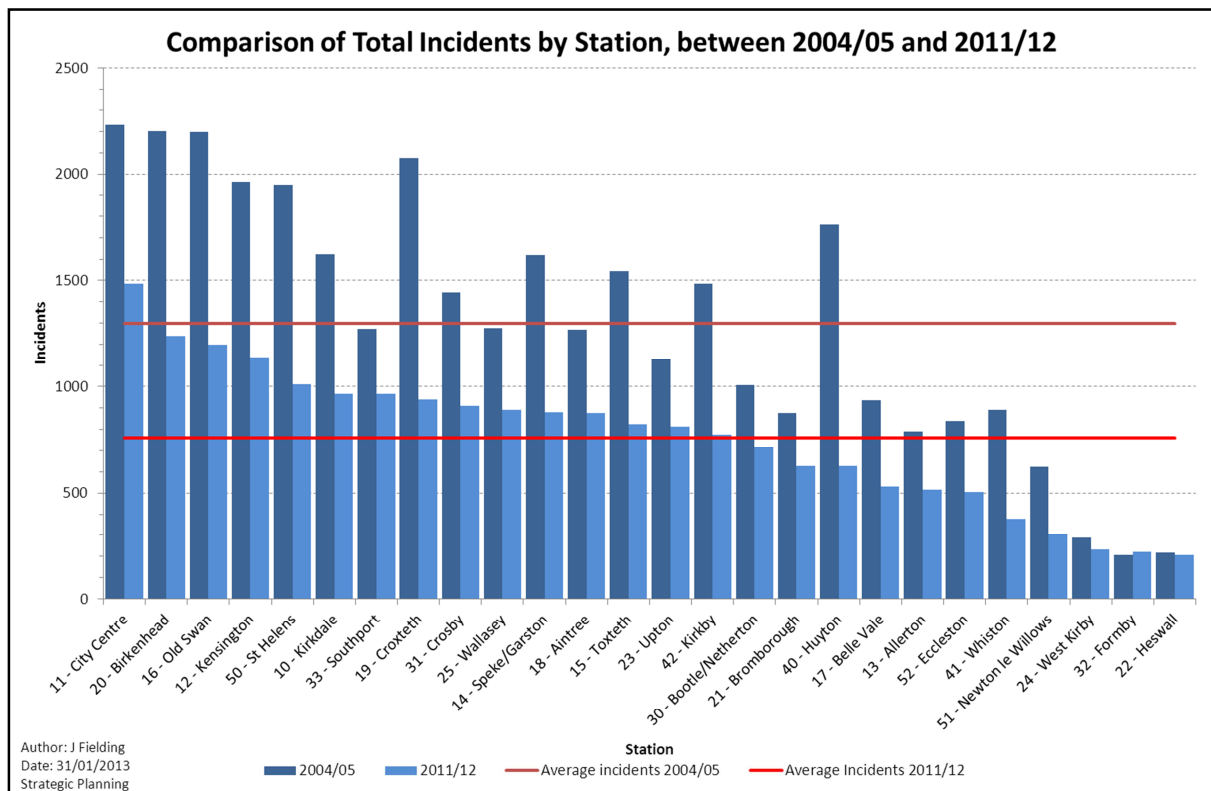


There has been a dramatic reduction in the number of deaths and injuries from fire. The graph below shows the reduction in overall incidents.





There is significant variation between stations in the number of incidents



CONCLUSIONS - Location and Community Risk

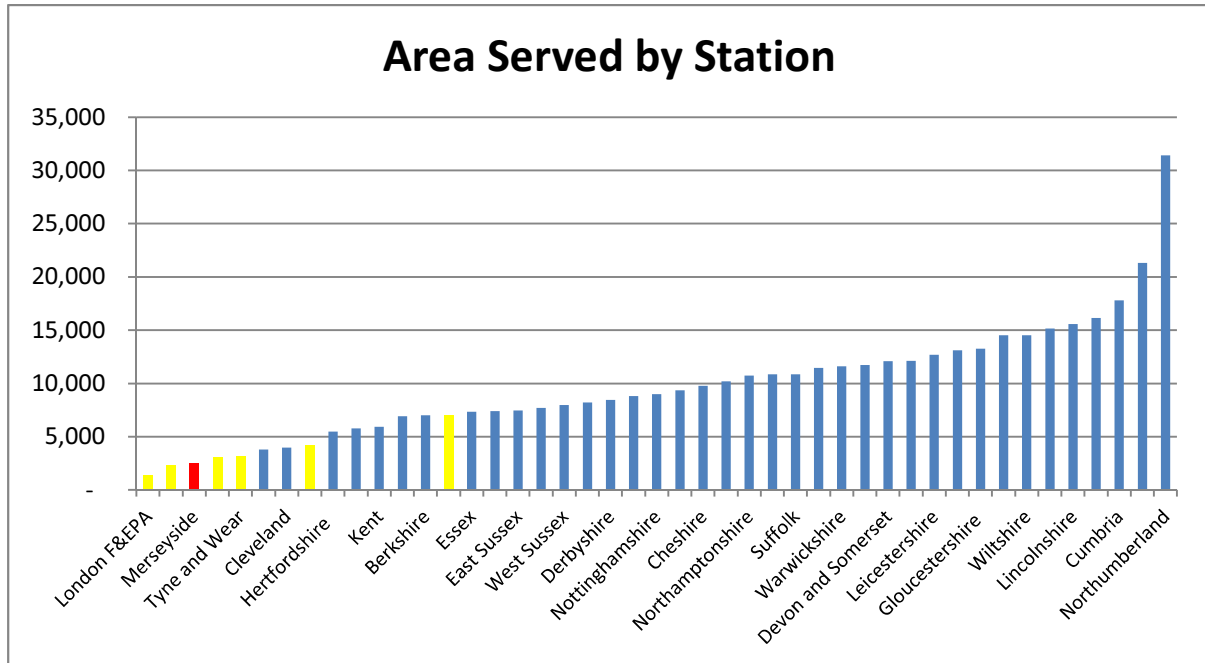
Merseyside's distribution of fire stations remains largely unchanged since the 1950's

Since the original distribution pattern of stations was established, the population of Merseyside has reduced dramatically and the risk pattern has changed significantly

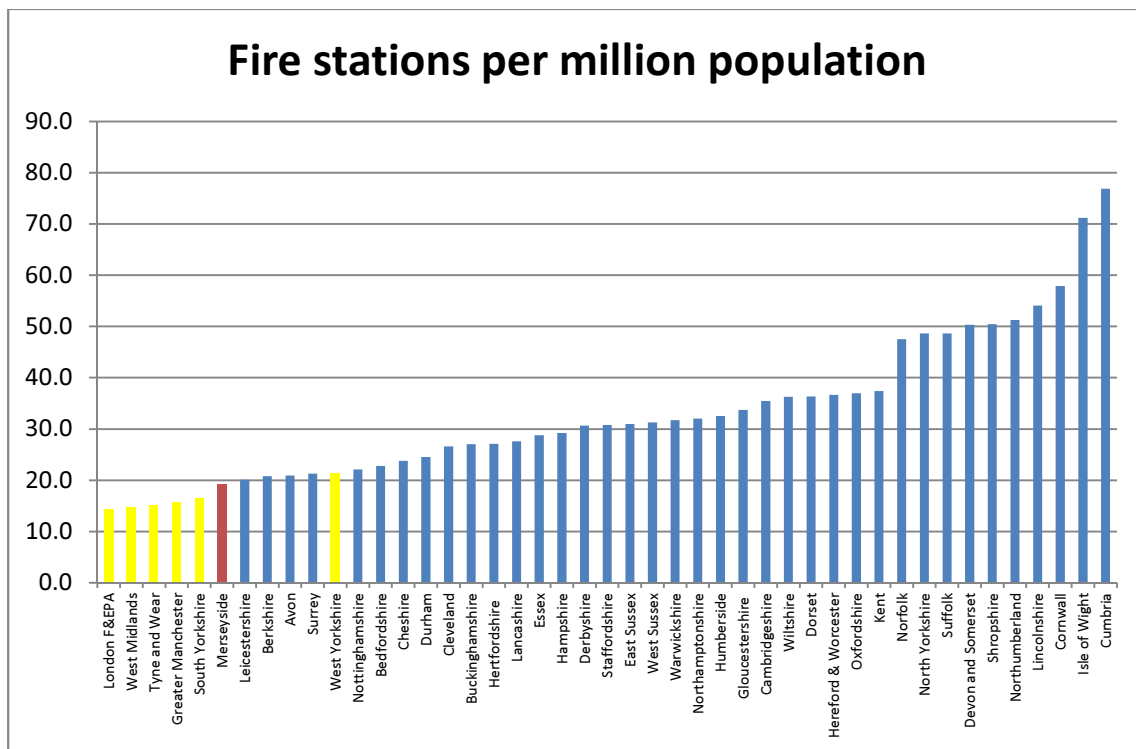
The number of incidents attended has reduced by over 50%

b) Comparison with Other Fire and Rescue Services

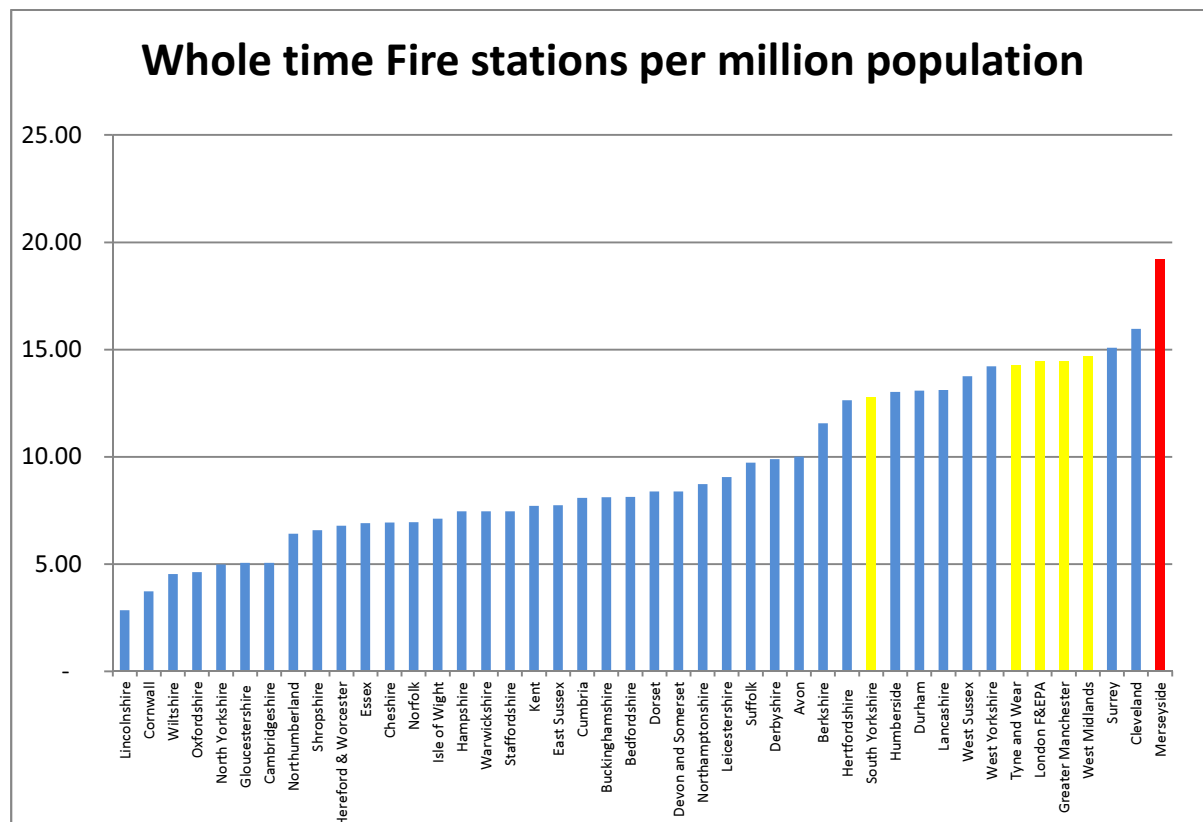
At present Merseyside has, because of historical decisions, a relatively high density of fire stations meaning each station serves a relatively small area. (The graph below is based on all stations)



Since Merseyside is mostly urban the stations do serve relatively high populations, however it can be seen that those population numbers are relatively lower than most other similar Metropolitan Areas (shown in Yellow/Merseyside in red).



It should be noted that this initial analysis is based upon **all** stations. Merseyside is one of few Authorities with fully whole time crews. When the analysis is repeated based on just whole time stations it can be seen that Merseyside has significantly higher numbers of fire stations than most other similar Authorities.



CONCLUSIONS – Comparison with other Fire and Rescue Services	
Merseyside's	has more fire stations than most comparable Authorities
Merseyside's	has no retained fire stations - across the country most Authorities use the retained service
Merseyside	has many more whole time fire stations than most other fire Authorities

c) Building Condition

For many years the Authority did not adequately maintain or modernise its building assets. It maintained facilities on a “need to address” basis. This meant it was left with a legacy of poor quality stations which were energy inefficient, lacked space utilisation, with poor access and amenity for both staff and community users. Most assets were built in the 1960’s or earlier and major investment was needed. The Authority recognised this and, since 2009, there has been a major programme for the Authority’s properties. The following new buildings have been delivered:-

- Seven stations under the PFI programme
 - Birkenhead
 - Belle Vale
 - Bootle/Netherton
 - Formby
 - Kirkdale
 - Newton-le-Willows
 - Southport
- Toxteth Firefit Hub
- Kensington
- Marine Rescue
- Workshops/Vesty 5A & B

In addition, there are three stations which are relatively newer:-

- City Centre
- Speke
- Old Swan

And, of course, work continues in delivering the new Joint Command and Control Centre at HQ which will also allow the refurbishment of the HQ building.

As a result, these newer buildings do not need major investment but they also limit the room for strategic asset decisions to some degree since the Authority would not want to compromise investments already made.

The improvements in the building stock have driven Authority and staff aspirations for the remaining buildings in the stock to be improved. The remaining properties, however, are older and mostly are in poor condition, lacking modern amenities and in many cases are short of appropriate facilities and training arrangements for firefighters.

Wirral

- West Kirby
- Upton
- Wallasey
- Heswall

- Bromborough

Liverpool

- Aintree
- Allerton
- Croxteth and the training facilities at the TDA

Sefton

- Crosby

Knowsley

- Kirkby
- Huyton
- Whiston

St Helen's

- Eccleston
- St. Helens

There are a number of other projects underway to improve the building stock already which draw significantly on organisational resources and capacity

Plans are in place to **improve LLAR accommodation facilities** at Newton and Formby where additional land has been acquired and accommodation blocks will be built on site.

The new **Joint Command and Control Centre** with the police (including the refurbishment of HQ and the development of a new secondary MACC) is a major multi million pound project. Much of the focus by estates (and other support teams) will be on the delivery of this by May 2014 target.

A number of other **mid-scale projects** are already planned

- Replace diesel tanks
- 5 year electrical testing
- Upton Tower
- Kensington Tower
- Demolish Claires Building at Liverpool City Community Fire Station

Other Issues

In relation to the immediate requirements of the older stations identified above, analysis has identified a list of potential **“quick win” works** for these stations that might be achieved ahead of major refurbishment and make significant improvements for staff at a local level. It is thought that an investment of £0.5m from the capital investment reserve would allow many of these basic works to be completed.

The **TDA requires significant investment** in the core training equipment in order to maintain standards, keep training effective and ensure firefighter safety.

CONCLUSIONS – Condition

Merseyside's has 15 Buildings that have been relatively newly built and/or refurbished and meet our vision for quality facility provision .

This means there are 14 sites which are old and in poor condition. Many of these sites realistically require a rebuild to achieve satisfactory facilities for public and staff.

In the poorer buildings some quick wins have been identified that would improve firefighter and community conditions with little investment.

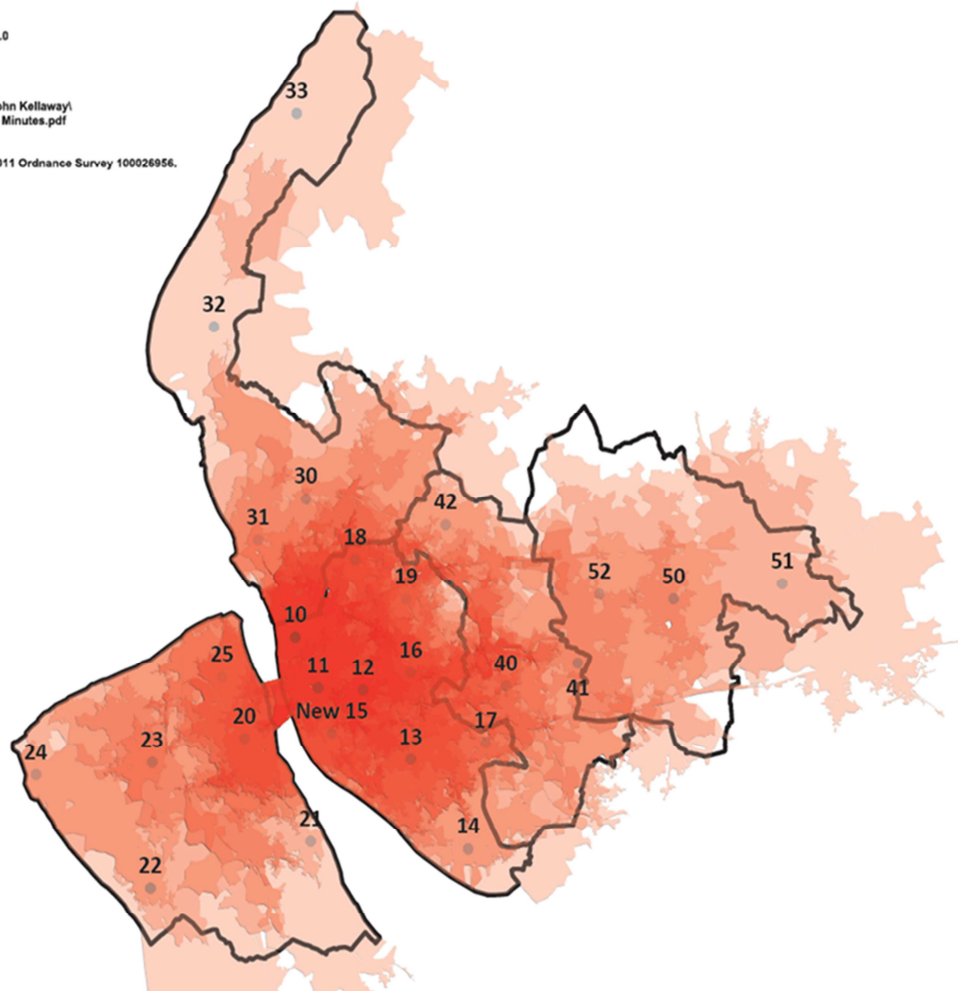
Corporate capacity to deliver major building works is already committed especially with the Joint Command and Control Centre (JCC).

d) Operational response

The Chief Fire Officer has undertaken a full review of emergency response as part of the Authority's IRMP. As part of that review the Authority moved to a 10 minute response standard against which to measure itself. However the current actual response time is much faster and is nearer five minutes.

Mapping has been undertaken to map the 10 minute response standard from current station sites and is shown below:-

Author: Gary Crosbie
Date: 04.01.2012
Produced Using: MapInfo Professional v11.0
Knowledge and Information Management
File Reference:
KIM:\Work Requests\Data and Systems\John Kellaway\
Travel Isochrone_PDF Work_19122011\10 Minutes.pdf
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The areas in deeper red show where there is significant overlap between fire stations response.

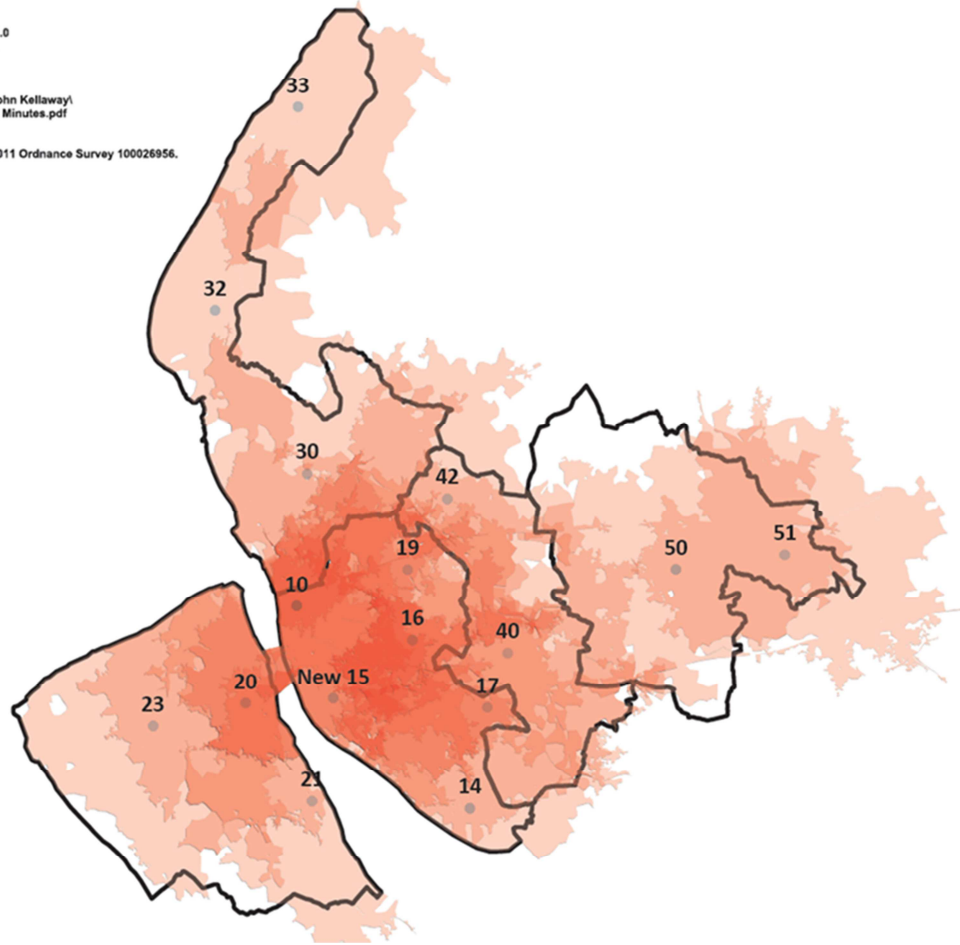
Further work has shown that it might be possible to provide full operational response to Merseyside to a ten minute standard from a theoretical minimum of ten stations— see overleaf

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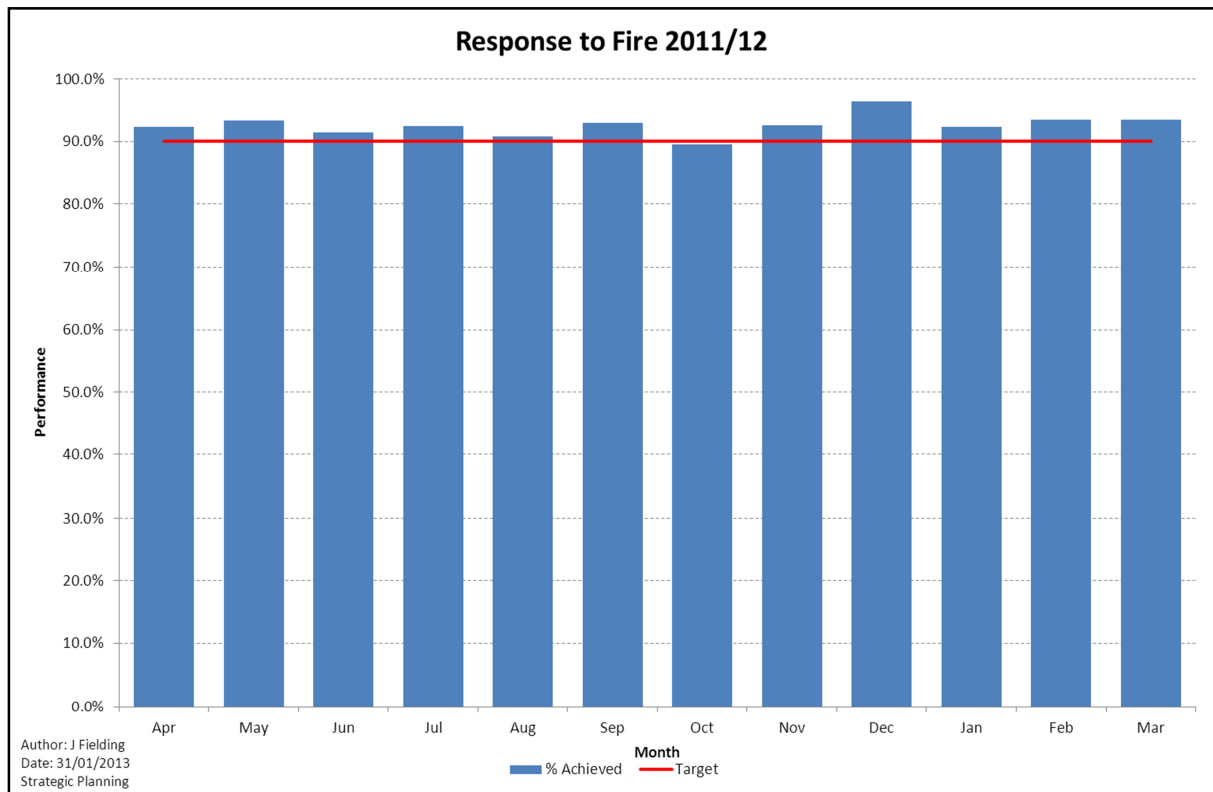
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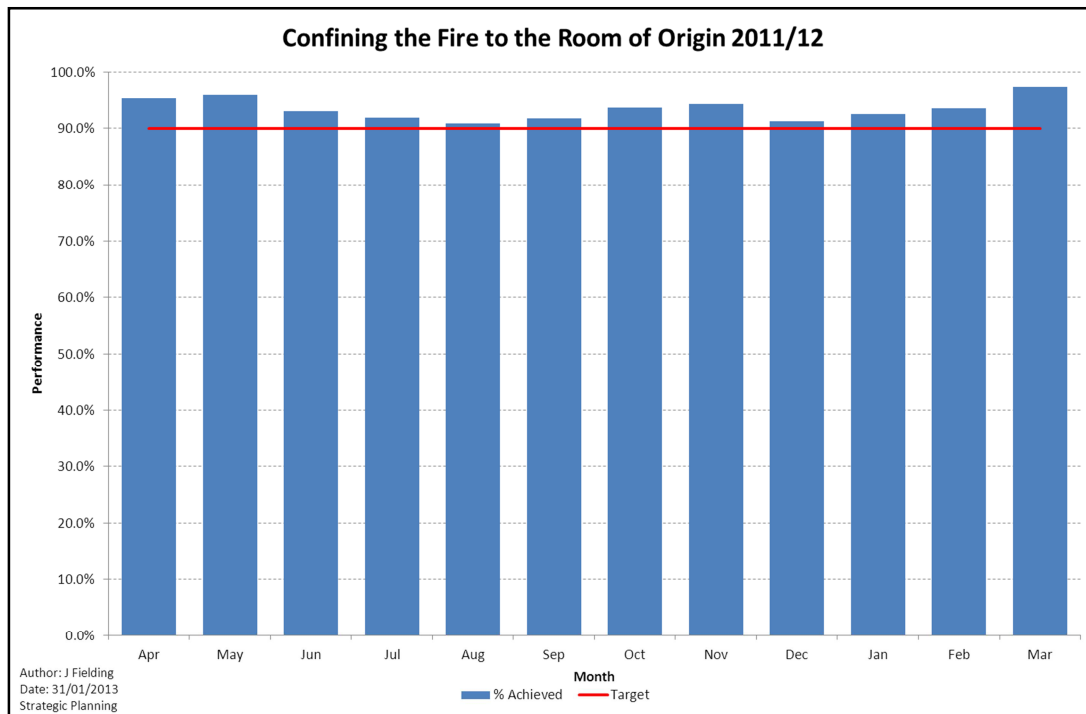
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Performance against standards is already very high. Response times are faster than in most areas of the country.



Fast response ensures that damage from fires is limited. The graph below shows fires contained to room of origin.



CONCLUSIONS – Operational response

Operational response times are amongst the very highest in the country.

The revised performance standards could be met in theory from significantly fewer response sites. However this would impact on the community and prevention work.

e) Fire Stations as Community Hubs

MFRA recognises that fire stations do not just exist for incident response but have a vital role in prevention and protection. Historically, few people would say that fire stations were inviting places with fire appliances barely visible behind closed doors. MFRA vision is of true community hubs that provide a range of services and staff working together to make Merseyside communities safer and stronger and firefighters safe and effective, stronger and healthier.

The stations very much belong to local communities - it is THEIR community fire station and it is fully accessible to meet the needs of the community. Community stations offer:

- Inviting & welcoming community rooms and break out spaces.
- Flexible facilities for our diverse community groups.
- The community an increased sense of ownership.

Community fire stations are ideally situated in the centre of our communities. This positioning enables the Service to positively contribute to the revitalisation of our neighbourhoods.

The fire and rescue service and its local stations have a unique ‘brand’ that is loved and trusted by the community in equal measure – the fire and rescue service draws people together in a way no other agency can. This allows work on:-

Health , Fitness & Wellbeing

We tackle health inequalities and improve the health and well-being of our communities through the provision of:

- Well-equipped community gyms that provide programmes like the heartbeat programme for patients recovering from heart problems
- Health advice and facilities for ‘drop in’ checks
- Specific targeted fitness programmes for groups and individuals
- Cooking programmes and advice on healthy eating
- Growing vegetables in allotments in the garden area

Working efficiently with Other Partners

Merseyside actively seeks to share its buildings with its local partners:-

- Ambulance services share a significant number of sites including Newton, Formby, Croxteth, Birkenhead, Southport and with a number of other sites under consideration
- Joint work with the Merseyside Police has resulted in the development of a Joint Command and Control Centre
- Local Authority partners share the community facilities and use the fire service brand to draw in its own customers
- A range of preventative programmes with RSL’s
- The Toxteth Firefit Hub is a unique collaboration with Liverpool City Council to deliver a youth zone and fire station

Helping the Young & Elderly

The enhanced facilities provided on our new community fire stations will enable the Service to interact more closely with the young and elderly in our communities through the provision of:

- Prince's Trust programmes for young adults aged 16 to 25
- BEACON courses 12 week programme (one day a week) for school children to learn about team building
- Young firefighter schemes for 8 to 12 year olds
- Diversionary courses run for young people in partnership with the local authorities
- Street cage soccer – trained football coaches running skill camps.
- Road traffic collision reduction courses.
- Specific safety campaigns and specialist safety equipment provided to vulnerable elderly persons in the area.
- A fully accessible building for those with disabilities.

Digital Inclusion

Over 40% of Merseysiders do not have access to the internet.

MFRA has invested in a network which allows us to provide safe, high quality internet access in a 'café' environment in all our stations.

Contribution to the Surroundings and Streetscape

The new community fire stations have been designed as welcoming buildings that will enhance neighbourhoods and have a civic presence. It is hoped that the community will have a sense of pride in their local fire station and the building will become a landmark for generations to come. To achieve this, buildings have been designed to provide:

- The best use of the site by prominently positioning the station
- A bold and inviting community entrance
- A distinctive angled frontage and glass façade for the community hub on the first floor
- A media wall – the ability to display community safety messages on the glass of the community hub and enable the Service to enhance community awareness
- A sustainable, 'environmentally friendly' building
- Clear appliance bay doors to provide impressive views of the fire appliances and give a sense of reassurance that the Service is ready to help

Volunteering and Local Involvement

Merseyside's own charitable arm the Fire Support Network as well as other charitable partners provide a range of services alongside the fire service including:-

- After Fire Support (Helping home owners recover from a fire)
- Youth engagement through Princes Trust and Street Cage Soccer programmes
- A range of preventative work including work with older communities

Community Urban Gardens

Our fire stations provide

- community garden areas
- allotments and growing areas for young people in urban areas
- managed green space for leisure, education and relaxation
- managed barbecue pits for reading groups and community parties

CONCLUSIONS – <u>Fire stations as Community Hubs</u>
MFRA recognises that our fire stations are important to and valued by the community we serve – they provide very much more than just an operational response
Public buildings work to their optimum when agencies work together to improve community outcomes.
MFRA has successfully shared accommodation on a large number of sites across the county. The joint service hub concept works well for the public.

F) Financial Implications

Merseyside has already faced a significant financial challenge in recent years and more pertinently in the last spending review cycle. In response to unprecedented budget cuts :-

- The number of firefighters has reduced from 1500 to 760 in the last decade
- The number of appliances has reduced from 42 to 28
- However, to date, the number of fire stations has remained static at 26.

The Government has announced further funding cuts for 2015/16 and intends to continue cutting beyond this. The current forecast is that the Authority will face a significant deficit - current forecast at £9.1m by 2016/17. More major savings will have to be made.

Whilst efforts are always made to maximise the savings from the back office and technical areas it is reasonably expected that there will need to be multi million pound savings from front line services over the next three years.

The current revenue budget for the Authority on estates is £3.3m as set out below

	£'m	
	Budget	
Estates Staff	0.3	9%
Repairs & Maintenance	0.6	18%
Energy	0.7	21%
Rates	0.9	27%
Water	0.3	9%
Cleaning	0.3	9%
Fixtures and Fittings	0.1	3%
Supplies and Services	0.1	3%
	<u>3.3</u>	

The table above excludes the PFI Annual payments which are £2.6 m p.a offset by grant of £2.1 m. (Net £0.5m).

The income from ambulance occupancy at PFI fire stations is currently at least £0.138m not including Bootle/Netherton. In addition they pay for their proportion of energy and rates costs

It is recognised that most of the cost of a fire station is in the firefighting staff within the building. Typically a 1 pump station costs about £1.1m per annum to run directly of which about £1m is staff costs and £0.1m relates to the building.

In relation to the assets of the Authority, capital investment is achieved for the most part by borrowing. In the longer term the borrowing costs of the Authority will reflect the asset base of the organisation. In recent years, as the overall budget has reduced, the repayment of debt has formed a bigger proportion of the total expenditure and (whilst exact comparison is difficult) is a higher proportion of the budget than for most FRA's. Unless the number of assets is reduced this will remain the case.

As the size of the organisation continues to reduce in line with budget pressures it has been identified that:

- Inroads cannot be made into corporate overheads unless the number of stations reduce
- Since most fire stations are now one pump, major savings can only be delivered by:-
 - Strategic mergers that reduce the number of appliances
 - Reducing the number of hours that stations are open or closing stations altogether

Encouraging partners to share buildings helps generate some income to offset the cost of stations.

CONCLUSIONS – <u>Financial Implications</u>
Given the financial pressures on the Authority large-scale savings will be required in the front line by 2016/17.
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CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSIONS - Location and Community Risk

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Since the original distribution pattern of stations was established the population of Merseyside has reduced dramatically and the risk pattern has changed significantly.

The number of incidents attended has reduced by over 50%.

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Merseyside's has more fire stations than most comparable fire authorities.

Merseyside's has no retained fire stations - across the country most authorities use the retained service.

Merseyside has **many** more whole time fire stations than most other authorities.

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Merseyside's has 15 buildings that have been relatively newly built and meet our vision for quality facility provision.

This means there are 14 sites which are aged and in poor condition. Many of these sites realistically require a rebuild to achieve satisfactory facilities for public and staff.

In the poorer buildings, some quick wins have been identified that would improve firefighter and community conditions with little investment.

Corporate capacity to deliver major building works is already committed especially with the JCC.

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The revised performance standards could be met in theory from significantly fewer response sites. However this would impact on the community and prevention work.

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Recommendations

- 1) The Authority must identify strategic mergers that allow operational response to be maintained whilst improving community and firefighter facilities and reducing costs.

Having assessed the location of the newer stations and the operational response needs of the service the Chief Fire Officer has identified that the two key geographic options where strategic mergers should be considered following consultation are:-

- a) Wirral:

Merging West Kirby and Upton to create a much improved station with extensive community facilities at Greasby, which would allow response standards to be maintained whilst improving the capability for community partnerships.

In addition, consideration might be given to the opportunities for the future development of Heswall. This site is commercially attractive and working with private/public partners may create opportunities to improve facilities or relocate services.

- b) St Helens and Knowsley:

Members have already approved in principle the working up of a feasibility study for the merger of Huyton and Whiston fire stations at Prescott . There are a number of merger options to be considered across St Helen's and Knowsley including Huyton./Whiston, St Helens/Eccleston or Whiston/Eccleston

The Chief Fire Officer will report back with detailed proposals on how to take these recommendations forward.

- 2) For all stations the aim should be to encourage partners to create community hubs and to share costs, reduce wasted space and provide better facilities. Reserves should be used for invest to save schemes which deliver longer revenue streams from partners.
- 3) The Authority should sensibly invest in small scale works that would improve fire-fighter and community facilities at older stations in the short term. £0.5m of the capital investment reserve should be set aside to support those works.

- 4) The CFO should review the facilities at the TDA and report in full on what improvements and investments are required to ensure firefighter safety.
- 5) The following key projects will also be progressed:-

Plans are in place to **improve LLAR accommodation facilities** at Newton and Formby where additional land has been acquired and accommodation blocks will be built on site.

The new Joint Command and Control Centre with the police (including the refurbishment of HQ and the development of a new secondary MACC) is a major multi million pound project. Much of the focus of estates (and other support teams) will be on the delivery of this by May 2014 target.

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