

**POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE  
(Resumed Meeting)**

**of the**

**MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**16<sup>h</sup> August, 2006**

**PRESENT: Councillor Don Prout in the Chair  
Councillors Les Byrom, Eddie Clein,  
Kevin Firth, Dave Hanratty, Betty Lowe,  
Linda Maloney, Isabel Moon, and Tony  
Newman,**

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**Councillors, John George, Jimmy Mahon  
Jack Colbert, Ted Grannell, Sharon  
Sullivan and Peter Johnson also attended**

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**Apologies for absence were received from  
Councillors Tommy Mann, Paula Keaveney and Vera  
Best**

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**16 Preliminary Matters**

The Committee considered declarations of interest, items of urgency or items which may require the exclusion of the press and public.

Resolved that:-

- (A) Two additional items of business relating to a CFO/155/06 Finance Presentations to Watches and copies of email correspondence between Chief Fire Officer and the Electoral Reform Society be considered as matters of urgency as a delay would not be in the interests of the efficient operation of the Service; and
- (B) the press and public be excluded from consideration of the item concerning the correspondence between the electoral reform society on the basis of the exemptions set out in paragraphs 3 and 5 of the Local Government Act 1972 and that the Committee is satisfied that in all the circumstances the public interest in making the exclusion outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

**17. Minutes of Last Meeting**

Resolved that the proceedings of the last adjourned meeting of the Committee held on 4<sup>th</sup> August be approved as a correct record and be signed accordingly by the Chair.

**18. Exemption of Southport, Upton and Birkenhead Fire Stations & Check –off Arrangements**

(CFO/151/06)

The Committee considered Report CFO/151/06 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning an update of a request to the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) to exempt from their proposed action, Southport, Upton and Birkenhead Fire Stations. In the light of these issues the Committee also considered -

- (1) a letter to the General Secretary of the Fire Brigades Union concerning FBU compliance with TUC guide lines on the “Provision of Emergency or Essential Services and Maintenance of Plant and Equipment “ Seeking the exemption of Southport, Upton and Birkenhead under these guidelines.
- (2) a letter to the Industrial Action Section Manager of the Electoral Reform Services raising concerns over the aforementioned role as an Independent scrutineer in the Ballot for Strike Action by the FBU.

Resolved that the Authority approve

- (A) the need to continue to press the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) for a response to the request for the three stations, Southport, Upton and Birkenhead , to be exempt from industrial action in accordance with the TUC Code on the Conduct in Industrial Disputes in 1979; and .
- (B) the need to continue to ascertain the numbers of FBU ballot papers that have been sent out, both from the FBU and the Electoral Reform Society and for the Authority to keep under review the prospect of formally giving 14 days notice to the FBU of termination of check-off arrangements in the absence of an appropriate response from the FBU to grant exemptions or limit action between times of lowest risk.

**19. Request For Military Support**

(CFO/152/06)

The Committee considered –

- (1) Report CFO/152/06 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning a proposal to request Military Support to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG); and
- (2) In the light of these issues

a letter to the Head of Division –DCLG FRS Development Division for the Military aid to other Government Departments (MAGD), indicating that for planning purposes the Authority has assumed that this would be unlikely and outlining the Authority’s planned response in the event of strike action by the FBU

Resolved that -

- (A) the Authority note the letter to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) asking for Military Support , and to request the CFO to continue to seek a response from DCLG; and
- (B) the Authority welcome the opportunity for the Fire Service Inspectorate to consider the Authority’s arrangements for self sufficiency, in the event of strike action by the FBU.

20. **Operational Response**  
(CFO/153/06)

The Committee, considered –

- (1) Report CFO/153/06 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning the proposed operational response and self sufficiency in the event of industrial action by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU); and in the light of these issues -
- (2) appendix 1 a report by process evolution on the Effect of Reduced Deployment Capability for Merseyside Fire & Rescue Services, outlining the planned response in the event of Industrial action by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU)
- (3) appendix 2 “Business Continuity Framework FBU Industrial action Merseyside”, outlining the proposed business continuity strategy to protect the Merseyside community in the event of strike action by the FBU.
- (4) Verbal reports from LLAR watch members from Heswall and West Kirkby

Resolved that -

- (A) the report be noted and the prospect of provision of 20 fire appliances (Rescue Pumps), including mobilising support of Aerial appliances during industrial action be noted and welcomed
- (B) The prospect of provision of full search and rescue services (including new dimension response, co-responder, marine rescue and High level rescue) and availability of the Search & Rescue team to deploy to all property fires and other non –fire life risk calls for the duration of the industrial action be noted and welcomed

- (C) the Authority note this provision will be considered by the Fire Service Inspectorate independently to reassure the Authority, the Government and most importantly the community of Merseyside of the proposals robustness; and
- (D) the Authority record their appreciation of the dedication and commitment of those personnel who will continue to provide a highly professional fire and rescue service to the community during periods of any strike action.

**21. Finance Presentations to Watches**  
(CFO/155/06)

The Committee considered as a matter of urgency

- (1) Report CFO/155/06 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning an update report on Finance Presentations to Watches as an update on recent watch briefings and issues arising therein and , in the light of these issues the Committee also considered -
- (2) appendix A “Frequently Asked Questions” and the responses provided

Resolved that the report and appendix be noted (A)

**22. E mails correspondence between Chief Fire Officer and Electoral Reform Society**

The Committee considered this item as a matter of Urgency, and resolved to exclude the press and public, and considered,

- (1) the issue of E mail correspondence from the Chief Fire Officer and the Electoral Reform Society seeking clarification of the validation process for the Fire Brigade Union ballot for strike action And in the light of these issues;-
- (2) a copy of an email from the Chief Fire Officer to the Electoral Reform Society; and
- (3) a supporting verbal report of the Chief Fire Officer.

Resolved that the copy of the emails and the verbal report be noted-

**23. Any Other Business**

Councillor Colbert wished his appreciation to be recorded on the letter sent by the Authority to his home wishing him a speedy return after his recent illness

**The Meeting was adjourned and to be re-convened on Monday 21st August at 15.00hrs, pending the result of the Strike Ballot by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU)**

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