



Statement of Assurance

2019-20



Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority

ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2019/20

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MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2019/20

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 revised [Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for England 2018](#) 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 2019 and 31st March 2020.

'Fire and rescue authorities must provide annual assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and show how they have had due regard to the expectations set out in their integrated risk management plan and the requirements included in the Framework. 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

In July 2019, after several years of reduced budgets and subsequent cuts to front line services, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority published a new [Integrated Risk Management Plan Supplement 2019/21](#) which put resources back into operational response and fire safety, largely through the use of reserves to pay off debt, thus freeing up revenue income to pay for more firefighters and Protection (legislative fire safety) staff to provide more resilience to deal with large scale emergencies and increased risk on Merseyside, and to help ensure the effective implementation of changes to legislative fire safety requirements as a result of the public inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was only beginning to be felt at the end of 2019/20 and more details will be provided in our 2020/21 Statement of Assurance, but at the time of writing this report it is fair to say that the Service and its staff have risen to the challenges they have faced. Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service has led the National response to the pandemic through our Chief Fire Officer as the Fire Gold Commander and in doing so we have supported fire and rescue services regionally and nationally and worked closely with other agencies to help them meet their own unprecedented challenges.

The pandemic has effected every aspect of all our lives and it has also had an impact on the future budget settlements for fire and rescue services, which are likely to be for one year only, instead of the hoped for three-year settlement that would allow longer term planning. You can rest assured however, that the Fire and Rescue Authority will continue to have the best interests of our communities at heart and our focus will remain on our Mission of Safer Stronger Communities, Safe Effective Firefighters.

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

2. Introduction

Merseyside is a Metropolitan area 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 2019 estimated figures showed that Merseyside has a population total of 1,429,910. This is a 3.5% increase on 2011 census figures. The population is split 48.9% male and 51.1% female. Merseyside has a lower proportion of children (18.1%) and higher proportions of working age residents (62.8%) and older people (19.1%) than North West averages.
- Of the total population of over 65's (based on 2011 census data) in Merseyside 98.4% are classed as White and 1.6% Black and Minority Ethnic

Our Profile of Merseyside Demography, Equality and Diversity report outlines the communities we serve. 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. There remain large pockets of deprivation with high levels of social exclusion and crime.

On the 26th September 2019 Central and Local Government released the Indices of Deprivation 2019. The picture across Merseyside is not positive, with evidence that the area has become more deprived when compared to the previous 2015 Indices of Multiple Deprivation release.

The following table compares – by council area - the count of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) in the 10% most deprived areas of England:

District	2015	2019	Difference	% Difference
Knowsley	45	46	1	2.2%
Liverpool	134	145	11	8.2%
Sefton	38	38	0	0.0%
St. Helens	28	29	1	3.6%
Wirral	44	52	8	18.2%

Grand Total	289	310	21	7.3%
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The table identifies that with the exception of Sefton, each district saw an increase in the number of LSOA's which are in the 10% most deprived LSOA's in England.

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 believe that fire does discriminate against the old and infirm and those in socio-economically disadvantaged areas. We have developed policies and procedures based on Risk, Demand and Vulnerability to 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 people aged over 65 and those referred to us by other agencies who understand fire risk, or by our staff as part of specific campaigns following fatal fires.

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.

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 through innovative use of crewing systems and placement of appliances relevant to the risk in that station area. 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 2020-21](#) in April 2020 and following a 12 week consultation period in April 2019 the [IRMP Supplement 2019/21](#) was published to update on proposals included in the [Integrated Risk Management Plan 2017-20](#).

The Service Delivery Plan establishes the standards of performance expected and reported on the 2019/20 outcomes. The IRMP, Annual Station Plans and Functional Plans set the Service Delivery Plan objectives for the year. Following an inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), in December 2018, areas identified for improvement have also been incorporated into Functional Plans and the Service Delivery Plan 2020/21.

The Integrated Risk Management Plan and Supplement set out how we will continue to deliver our services to meet local risks. It describes a fire and rescue service that is leaner than in past years, but one where imaginative use of resources is helping reverse that trend and services are 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.

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 Councillor 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 www.merseyfire.gov.uk

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
- Local Government Association
- National Joint Council
- North West Employers' Organisation
- North West Fire and Rescue Advisory Forum
- Safer Merseyside Partnership

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
- [MFRA Constitution 2019/20](#) 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. 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 Service National Framework for England 2018](#) 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.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority are satisfied that the systems they have in place fulfil the National Framework requirements.

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 Leadership Team as appropriate, can be found on page 39 of the

[MFRA Constitution 2019/20](#)

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 2020](#) (Department for Communities and Local Government) and [CIPFA 2020](#) (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.

In September 2018 the People Strategy and Implementation Plan were published. These documents can be found on the [Website](#) under Authority meetings - Community Safety and Protection Committee 4th September 2018.

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. 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 operational 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

In June 2018 Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority conducted a 3rd staff survey, facilitated by an independent organisation (People Insight). 56% of staff (548) took part this was a 5% increase in responses when compared to the staff survey in 2016. However, the MFRA overall engagement score was 75% which is a 1% point increase on the 2016 score.

- 76% of respondents said they enjoyed their work
- 87% said they understood how the work they do helps MFRA achieve its mission and aims.

As a result of the Staff Surveys MFRA developed a set of engagement principles which are embedded across the service. When staff were asked to name "one thing which has changed since the last survey in 2016 which has had a positive impact on you", comments included:

- Autonomy – Watch managers feel less micromanaged which is important for well-being.
- Learning and development – increased progression and training opportunities, less strict assessment, better integration of new recruits.
- Team work – being part of a professional, enthusiastic, committed and supportive team
- Resources and IT – the portal was popular and systems being automated was welcome resulting in less paperwork

A summary report on the Staff Survey Results provided by People Insight was considered by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority on 18th October 2018. This report summarises all of the results produced by People Insight and can be found on the MFRA website.

A further Staff Survey was delayed during 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic but is taking place in November and December 2020 and outcomes will be reported back in the 2020/21 Statement of Assurance.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

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 published an [Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2019-20](#) which set 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 to identify foreseeable risks and develop services to respond to those risks and help

prevent incidents occurring. The Authority's [Integrated Risk Management Plan 2017-20](#) and [IRMP Supplement 2019/21](#) meet these obligations. [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. On the 26th September 2019 Central and Local Government released the Indices of Deprivation 2019. The picture across Merseyside is not positive with evidence that the area has become more deprived than the previous 2015 Indices of Multiple Deprivation release.

The Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2015 indicate that 34 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 percent 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 focusing on 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:

- The river Mersey and the resulting high volume of shipping
- 201 high rise buildings (defined as over 18m or 6 storeys)
- 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.
- Terrorism risks associated with city centre locations
- Major waste recycling centres

6. Risks beyond our borders

National & Local Resilience

Over recent years the risk of large scale emergency incidents has increased in the UK. This can be attributed to climate change and increased incidence of terrorist activities. As a direct result and to mitigate this risk the Government introduced the 'National Resilience' programme.

MFRA is the lead authority for the delivery of National Resilience on behalf of Home Office. These arrangements include the management and assurance of National Resilience Capabilities, mobilisation and coordination of national assets at major incidents, the coordination of all National Resilience training and the management of the servicing and maintenance contract for all National Resilience vehicles and equipment. MFRA also 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) vehicle with a cadre of DIM advisors and Mass Decontamination Unit (MDU). We also have 2 type B flood rescue teams and two Flood Tactical Advisor declared on the DEFRA national flood rescue asset register. All of these assets are available at all times for national deployment.

MFRA is a member of the UK International Search and Rescue Team (UKISAR), which is an internationally deployable, heavy classified Urban Search and Rescue (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 the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (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 2020-21](#) for details of 2019/20 performance indicator outcomes
- [Integrated Risk Management Plan 2017-20](#)
- [IRMP Supplement 2019/21](#)
- [Budget and Financial Plan 2015/16-2019/20](#)
- Corporate Risk Register 2019/20 can be found in Authority papers (23rd May 2019) on the

[website](#)

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 Service National Framework for England 2018](#)
- [Local Government Acts 1972 to date](#)
- The [Service Delivery Plan 2020-21](#) highlights MFRA's commitment to delivering an excellent service to the communities of Merseyside. This document brings together actions from the [Integrated Risk Management Plan 2017-20](#), [IRMP Supplement 2019/21](#), Station Community Safety Delivery Plans, Functional Plans, [Equality and Diversity](#) planning and details of outcomes from 2019/20. 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 2020-21](#) 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 who is responsible for the operational element of the MFRA workforce. This equates to approximately 621 operational staff across the 22 Fire Stations, Marine Rescue, Fire Control and Officer Group.

Community Risk Management – Prevention and Protection

In 2019/20 we restructured our Community Risk Management Function creating separate Prevention and Protection Functions to acknowledge the requirement to place increasing focus on Protection as a result of the outcomes of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.

The activities undertaken by Prevention and Protection have been an integral part of the Service's Integrated Risk Management Plan since its introduction in 2005 reducing fires, deaths and injuries in domestic and commercial premises whilst making Merseyside safer and stronger.

The work of Prevention and Protection has expanded to cover extensive and wide ranging activities to actively target and reduce risks in the interests of protecting our communities and our firefighters. In order to manage these activities, we have structured our community risk management provision to align under the 3 P's:

Protection

The publication of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry recommendations in Autumn 2019 has resulted in an increased focus on legislative fire safety and building safety, particularly as it relates to high rise premises, the Authority has taken account of that in its Integrated Risk Management Plan Supplement and increased its resources to carry out this important work.

- **PREMISES** (Community Fire Protection Department)
 - Business Safety

Our Priorities:

PREMISES – Community Fire Protection department aim to:

- Deliver the recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry
- Enhance fire safety provision for operational personnel through measures including delivery of Simple Operational Fire Safety Assessment (SOFSA), fires in the built environment training and exercising in premises of special interest such as heritage or those containing fire engineered solutions.
- Review the Service's Risk Based Inspection Programme to ensure that our resources are focused on premises that represent the greatest risk in the event of fire.
- Provide advice and support to smaller businesses through the provision of a Better Business for All (BBfA) Partnership with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to simplify the regulatory system for business owners and responsible persons and help them comply with the law.

Prevention

- **PEOPLE** (Community Fire Prevention Department)
 - Home Safety

- **PLACE** (Community Safety Department)
 - Community Safety Partnerships
 - Arson reduction
 - Road safety
 - Water Safety

Our Priorities:

PEOPLE – Community Fire Prevention department aim to:

- Reduce accidental dwelling fires and deaths and injuries which result from these fires across Merseyside
- Focus our Prevention work on protecting vulnerable people and targeting those most at risk.
- Create a team of in house volunteers to allow us to expand our reach into existing and emerging communities as an active and engaged stakeholder to reduce risk of fire and other emergencies.

PLACE – Community Safety department aim to:

- Work with Community Safety Partnerships and associated thematic sub groups in order to reduce arson and anti-social behaviour in high demand areas.
- Work with Merseyside Road Safety Partnership and associated thematic sub groups in order to improve road safety and reduce deliberate vehicle misuse.
- Work with partners to establish a Merseyside Water Safety Forum in order to improve public safety and promote the safe use of our waterways.

In addition to the above, and underpinning all of the 3 P's we have our [Youth Engagement Department](#)

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT aim to:

- Develop a Youth Engagement Strategy incorporating our planned youth engagement programmes and a sustainable medium term funding plan.
- Enhance our youth engagement programmes through enhanced integration within Community Risk Management Function.
- Explore collaboration opportunities with Merseyside Police and other partners to maximise youth engagement opportunities.

8. Our Performance

The MFRA [Service Delivery Plan 2020-21](#) reports on performance for 2019/20 and establishes the Key (KPI) and Local Performance Indicators (LPI's) and service delivery standards for 2020/21. Performance against the KPI's is reported to Authority in the [Service Delivery Plan reports](#) and to the Strategic Leadership Team and Performance Management Group (PMG) on a quarterly and monthly basis respectively.

workover the years we have refined our approach to Prevention and Protection, using intelligence to target our activities on the most vulnerable people and highest risk buildings. This is reflected in our planning and

performance, with Home Fire Safety Checks, and Safe and Well Visits, being delivered to specifically targeted people identified as being in need of our intervention.

The risk profile of Merseyside is changing. The population is now increasing after decades of decline however it is also ageing. The link between old age and vulnerability to fire is well recognised within MFRA. Our Safe and Well visits enhance our Home Fire Safety Checks which are delivered by operational and community safety teams to specifically targeted people identified as being in need of our intervention.

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 in the [Service Delivery Plan 2020-21](#)

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 below illustrates the number of incidents attended by type, for an average day between 2009/10 and 2018/19. The table identifies that during 2018/19 44.1 incidents were attended on a daily basis against 63.1 during 2009/10. Although the number of incidents attended daily have increased slightly over the last 3 years the reduction over the longer period 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	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Accidental Fires in the Home	3.3	3.3	3.1	3.2	2.9	3.0	2.7	2.5	2.5	2.4
Other Building and Property Fires	3.3	3.2	2.5	2.3	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.0	1.8	1.5
Vehicle Fires	2.6	2.2	2.0	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.3	2.3	1.9	1.8
All Antisocial Behaviour Fires	20.7	18.5	11.8	15.8	12.0	12.5	13.0	13.2	14.5	9.7
False Automatic Fire Alarms	16.2	15.2	12.5	7.5	7.7	7.9	8.6	9.3	9.0	10.1
Other False Alarms	5.7	5.0	4.7	4.5	4.4	4.8	5.2	5.8	5.6	5.3
Road Traffic Collisions	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.7	1.5	1.7	2.0
Other Special Services	5.9	5.3	5.3	5.6	5.6	6.0	6.8	7.1	7.3	8.7
Grand Total	59.2	54.0	43.0	42.0	38.2	39.9	42.4	43.8	44.1	41.5

What others have said about our performance?

As a result of an excellent brief from NRAT, we got exactly what we needed to help us understand both the Fire & Rescue Service capabilities and the command & control structures in place at the national level.

Major Mark Dunkley; Specialist Group, Military Intelligence. Standing Joint Command

A huge thanks to all at National Resilience for pulling together the National reports showing the broader COVID impacts across the sector. We and ministers do appreciate it.

Luke Edwards; Director of Home Office Fire Resilience, Crime, Policing and Fire Group

Can I thank the wonderful crew that attended my road accident yesterday at about 6pm on Staley Drive, Bootle. They were very kind, caring and professional, I think I remember the name Chris but I was all of a jitter!. They are credit to your service. Please pass on my gratitude. Thank you so much. X

Facebook comment from a person involved in an RTC that MRFS attended.

“Well paced and informative training delivered friendly and professional manner”

“Relevant content, specific chemicals and hazards and dealings with them. Excellent content delivered by knowledgeable professionals”

“Excellent training by the instructors, you could tell a lot of thought had gone into the training to tailor it the industry we work in”

Feedback following external corporate training courses at the Training and Development Academy

9. Financial Performance

In accordance with the statutory requirement under the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 MFRA published a [Statement of Accounts 2019-20](#) and

[Annual Governance Statement 2019-20](#) (which can be found under Authority documents submitted on 4th June 2020) 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).

On the basis of the reviews undertaken Internal Audit have concluded that:

“it is our opinion that we can provide Substantial Assurance that the system of internal control in place at Merseyside Fire & Rescue accords with proper practice. This opinion is based on the individual assurance levels we have provided for each of the audit reviews undertaken during the year, and includes consideration of the wider sources of assurance provided to the Authority. The 2019/20 fundamental systems audits completed to date have shown a substantial level of compliance and none of the audits have identified weaknesses that have required a corporate impact assessment of major or moderate. Based on the audit work carried out in 2019/20 we are not aware of any significant control weaknesses, which impact on the Annual Governance Statement”

External Audit

External audit services are carried out by the Grant Thornton. Grant Thornton’s 2019/20 Audit Findings Report gave an unqualified opinion on the Authority’s financial statements and concluded that the Authority has put in place proper arrangement for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31st March 2020.

The Statement_of_Accounts_2019-20 and Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 can be found on the Authority’s Finance webpage at: <http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk/asp/finance/finance5.aspx>

Due to COVID19 the deadline for Grant Thornton to complete their audit for 2019/20 is 30.11.2020. The current plan is that a special audit committee will be arranged for 26.11.2020 – this SoA may have to be updated with its outcomes after Policy and Resources Committee on 10th December

The [Statement of Accounts 2019-20](#) and [Annual Governance Statement 2019-20](#) can be found on the Authority’s [MFRA website - Finance and Accounts](#)

Our budget for 2019/20

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20 – 2023/24

For many years now the Authority has maintained a comprehensive medium term financial plan (MTFP) and capital programme. Since 2010 the Government has implemented an austerity plan in an attempt to reduce national debt. A significant element of the plan was to reduce the level of Government funding for local government (this includes fire and rescue authorities). As the Authority had a relatively low council tax base it was more reliant upon Government grant funding to support its revenue budget and therefore suffered a more proportionate financial loss than almost every other fire and rescue authority in the country.

To deal with the financial challenge the Authority approves a rolling 5-year MTFP on an annual basis at the Authority's Budget meeting. The 2019/20 MTFP approved at the Budget Authority meeting on 28th February 2019 delivered a balanced financial position up to 2020/2021.

In 2010/11 the revenue budget requirement was £73.3m of which Government support funded 63%. The 2019/20 Budget requirement was £60.3m, therefore over the 2010/11 – 2019/20 period the total revenue budget will have reduced from £73.3m to £60.3m or £13.0m which represents a 18% cash or approximately 40% real reduction.

The cumulative percentage reduction in Government revenue support for the Authority between 2010/11 (£46.3m) and 2019/20 (£30.8m) equates to a 33% cash reduction or approximately 50% in real terms.

Savings options over this period have included significant reductions in the number of firefighters and support staff; the number of available fire appliances; reductions in fire stations; and other non-employee expenditure. Operational savings have been delivered by merging fire stations and changes to firefighter work patterns/shifts to match resources to demand. However, the Authority has managed maintain its response attendance standard of an appliance at a life risk incident within 10 minutes on at least 90% of occasions

The structural changes required to sustain the approved savings within that plan have all been actioned including the final station merger proposal, completed following the opening of the new St Helens fire station in October 2020.

To assist with the Authority's long term financial planning, the current plan extends up to and including 2024/25. However, as the level of uncertainty over future costs and funding beyond 2020/21 is significant, particularly regarding the level of future Government support, any financial challenge from 2021/22 have simply been noted at this time.

Financial Management

The Authority produces a five-year financial plan that takes into account Revenue, Capital, Reserves and Prudential Borrowing forecasts. The Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20 to 2023-24 and Budget Resolution can be found on the [MFRA website - Finance and Accounts](#) which was agreed at the Authority Budget meeting on 28th February 2019.

Our long term financial challenges and commitments

The Authority's approved savings to deal with the financial challenge identified within the MTFP, including merging fire stations, changes to work patterns/shifts to match resources to demand and further savings from support staff and non-employee expenditure. The Authority is concerned that future Government funding from 2021/22 onwards will not meet the Service's requirements and additional frontline savings will be required.

10. Our Future Plans

Our future plans are detailed in the [Integrated Risk Management Plan 2017-20](#), [IRMP Supplement 2019/21](#), and [Service Delivery Plan 2020-21](#). 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.

As part of the 2019/20 Budget report the Chief Fire Officer, (CFO), received Members' support to increase the frontline firefighter response and protection establishment from 620 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) to 642 FTE, plus a new fire engineer post in protection, and an increase in the available fire appliances from 26 to 30. The Authority plans on maintaining the frontline firefighter Full Time Equivalent (FTE) at 642 whilst investing in the Capital Infrastructure of the Authority.

Station mergers were approved by the Authority in three Districts. Two mergers were completed by the end of 2019/20; Prescott (merging Huyton and Whiston fire stations) and Saughall Massie (Upton and West Kirby). The new St Helens (St Helens and Eccleston) fire station opened in October 2020.

The current planning assumptions, that delivered a balanced 2020/2021 financial position, were considered by Members at the January 2020 budget strategy day. As with any assumptions those built into the medium term financial plan will be at risk from factors beyond the Authority's control, such as approved pay awards or actual Government funding levels. If any of these assumptions vary then the forecast budget position will be affected. The Authority receives regular financial review reports throughout the year and any corrective action to keep the budget and MTFP in balance will be considered by Members' as part of this reporting process.

Collaboration

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 introduced 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 working closely with our blue light partners. Merseyside Police share our Joint Control Centre at Service Headquarters and the new fire station at Prescott. We have plans to share a number of fire stations including Formby and Heswall. We are also delivering a number of collaborative projects and sharing information to improve services.

North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) share a number of our fire stations (Formby, Southport, Bootle and Netherton, Birkenhead and Newton le Willows) and the 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 [Integrated Risk Management Plan 2017-20](#), [IRMP Supplement 2019/21](#) documentation is available in the Authority section of the website. Planning for the IRMP Supplement 2019/21 started during 2018/19 with full reports available at Authority Budget Committee on 28th February 2019 and Authority on 3rd July 2019.

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 MFRA with all relevant documentation available on the MFRA website and in the [Integrated Risk Management Plan 2017-20](#) and [IRMP Supplement 2019/21](#). During the planning process we host a wide variety of consultation and engagement forums including:

- Public consultation facilitated by an independent partner organisation – ORS Consultation Report can be found in the Authority section of the MFRA website under the Authority Budget Committee on 28th February 2019 and Authority on 3rd July 2019.
- Staff consultation
- Local authority and strategic partner consultations
- Staff representative bodies (trade unions)

For the IRMP 2019/21 Supplement consultation lasting 12 weeks was conducted to review the IRMP 2017/20 actions and to seek approval for proposals for 2019/21 onwards. Results of this can also be found on the Fire Authority page on the MFRA website.

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. Consultation with interested parties will take place during 2020/21 when preparing the Integrated Risk Management Plan 2021-24. 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-

- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016 and Data Protection Act 2018 which require organisations to protect personal data and privacy of EU citizens including processing of personal and sensitive information.
- 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 link above.

Privacy Notice

We process information securely and follow the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018. 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](#) and [Privacy Notices](#) can be found on the MFRA website.

Assurance Declaration

The Chair of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority and Chief Fire Officer of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service are satisfied that the Authority’s financial, governance and operational assurance arrangements are adequate and operating effectively and meet the requirements detailed within the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

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 10th December 2020.

Councillor Les Byrom
Chair of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority

Phil Garrigan
Chief Fire Officer

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
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulations
HVP	High Volume Pump
INSARAG	International Search and Rescue Advisory Group
IOSH	Institute of Occupational Safety and Health
IRMP	Integrated Risk Management Plan
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
MACC	Mobilising and Communication Centre
MDD	Mass Decontamination Disrobe
MFRA	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority

MTFP	Medium Term Financial Plan
NEBOSH	National Examination Board of Safety
NOL	National Operational Learning
ORS	Opinion Research Services
PSIAS	Public Sector Internal Audit Standards
SMA	Subject Matter Adviser
SOFSA	Simple Operational Fire Safety Assessment
SOLACE	Society of Local Authority Chief Executives
UKISAR	UK International Search and Rescue Team
USAR	Urban Search and Rescue