

REPORT OF THE LANCASHIRE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY - 18 SEPTEMBER 2023

Chair's Welcome And Introduction

The Chair welcomed County Councillor Matthew Salter who had replaced County Councillor Andrea Kay on the Authority. The Chair advised that CC Kay had been unwell. The Authority wished her a speedy recovery and asked that their wishes be passed on to her.

The Chair advised that the International Search and Rescue (ISAR) Team had won the Bravery Award at the BBC Make a Difference awards, following their deployment to Turkey earlier this year.

The Chair explained that, due to the devastation caused by the earthquake in Morocco, the ISAR Team (plus Search dog) had been deployed to assist with the rescue effort.

Member Champion Activity report

The Authority appointed its Member Champions at its Annual meeting in June and current Member Champions were:

- Community Safety – Councillor Jean Rigby
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Councillor Zamir Khan
- Health and Wellbeing – County Councillor Andrea Kay (up to 30 August 2023)
- Road Safety – County Councillor Ron Woollam

Reports relating to the activity of the Member Champions were provided on a regular basis to the Authority and this report related to activity up to 31 August 2023.

Members commented on the valuable work of the Prince's Trust, in conjunction with LFRS. It was acknowledged that Lancashire had the largest delivery of the Prince's Trust programme in the UK and agreed that a presentation would be brought to a future meeting of the Fire Authority to highlight the achievements of the programme.

County Councillor Ron Woollam advised that he had attended the 'Alive to Drive' demonstration organised by the Lancashire Road Safety Partnership. He urged Members to attend future events as this was a very interesting and important campaign to raise awareness of road safety in Lancashire.

It was noted and endorsed that County Councillor John Singleton would replace County Councillor Andrea Kay as Member Champion for Health and Wellbeing.

Fire Protection Reports

The Authority received a report that summarised Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service prosecutions pertaining to fire safety offences under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005. One case was currently within the court system with the trial provisionally set for 16 October 2023. Protection teams continued to investigate and build files in relation to further cases where offences were believed to have been committed, which involved a number of types of premises as outlined in the report. Of those cases one had been served a summons with the first hearing scheduled for 20 September 2023. Two of the other cases had draft summonses drawn and four were currently under review by legal counsel. There was also one further case currently being investigated which might see a joint prosecution with the Health and Safety Executive.

Given the rapidly evolving regulatory change in building fire safety, an update on Fire Protection and Business Support was also provided, detailing how the Service was adapting delivery whilst developing its workforce, to ensure that it kept pace with the changes and improved public and firefighter safety within the built environment.

At the end of July 2023, circa 3,685 Business Fire Safety Checks had been undertaken across Lancashire, with 619 identifying significant fire safety concerns resulting in follow up action by Protection teams. The delivery of this valuable risk reduction work was well established across fire stations and continued to receive system refinements.

From 1 October 2023 the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, would be amended by the introduction of Section 156 of the Building Safety Act 2022 which required all responsible persons to record their fire risk assessment in full (including all findings) along with the fire safety arrangements for premises, in all circumstances. This was a significant change for responsible persons, as the Fire Safety Order currently only required a written fire risk assessment if the business had five or more employees or required a license. The new legislation would also introduce several additional duties on the responsible person, regarding information they must record and provide along with increasing the level of fines for some offences.

To better prepare responsible persons for these changes, LFRS continued to undertake engagement activities, which included: i) the production of a letter outlining all relevant changes. This was being distributed as part of the protection department's day-to-day interactions with businesses and premises; ii) digital media and digital copies of the letter were being shared via partners; and iii) a campaign highlighting the changes was being conducted through LFRS' social media channels and the website.

LFRS would also be supporting Business Safety Week (11 to 17 September) where specific activities, engagement and media would raise awareness and support businesses and responsible persons to prepare for change and keep fire safety a priority.

Operational Incidents of Interest

The Authority received a report that provided information relating to operational incidents of note since the last meeting. As this had been a very busy operational period, the report detailed only the larger deployments or more complex incidents. Full details of the following incidents were provided in the report:

- Building fire in Fleetwood
- Storage yard in Accrington
- Multiple houses on fire in Accrington
- Derelict chapel in Rossendale
- Explosives discovered during police operation in Leyland
- Commercial building fire in Haslingden
- Road traffic collision on the M6, closing the motorway in both directions due to a spillage
- Commercial building fire in Burnley
- Commercial building fire in Barnoldswick
- Commercial building fire in Blackburn

Re-appointment of Clerk to the Authority

The Authority approved the re-appointment of Mr Mark Nolan as Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Lancashire Combined Fire Authority for a period of twelve months, to the September meeting of the Authority in 2024.

DAVID O'TOOLE
Chair

LFRS
Fulwood