

## **LANCASHIRE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY**

Meeting to be held on Monday 23 April 2018

### **FIRE FIGHTERS CHARITY**

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#### **Executive Summary**

The Fire Fighters Charity is a registered Charity. Their aim is simple, 'to help members of the fire and rescue community who put their lives on the line every day to save others, whilst providing support to their families'.

The main purpose of this report is to explain the relationship of mutual benefit that exists between the Charity and Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS). In its simplest form the benefit of significant numbers of staff provided with a variety of residential programmes, the bulk of which involve intensive physiotherapy, is considerable both on a personal and organisational level.

This paper explains how the activities of the Fire Fighters Charity combine with the current levels of support provided by the Service and how the Service currently interacts with the Charity.

#### **Decision Required**

Members are asked to note the report and endorse the current approach. In June 2014 the CFA endorsed the approach laid out in a previous paper. This paper serves more to update Members on the current position.

#### **Information**

The Fire Fighters Charity, previously called the Fire Brigades National Benevolent Fund, has been in existence since 1943, with Her Majesty the Queen being Royal patron since 1953. It is the UK's leading provider of services that enhance quality of life for serving and retired fire service personnel and their families.

Its services start with a dedicated free helpline, but most of the support they provide is through three centres in Cumbria, Devon and West Sussex. These provide a range of support programmes including physical rehabilitation, together with recuperative and nursing care. They also support emotional recuperation, which is designed to help those who have suffered injury, illness, stress or bereavement. The Charity has more recently moved into supporting mental health issues, often these are inherent in trauma injuries.

Although our staff use all three centres, Jubilee House near Penrith is the most in demand. It is run by a dedicated team of professionals able to cater for a diverse range of needs with intensive physiotherapy often being a key component of any recovery

plan. These residential programmes have now moved to seven day working with a variety of duration tailored to individual need.

Although it is the individual employee who requests support from the Charity, it is considered by Occupational Health as an additional tool to aid recovery and support early return to work. Significant numbers of staff benefit from the services of the Charity. Their residential interventions assist with early return to full duties, with the vast majority of these requiring the more intensive therapy programmes.

It is difficult to quantify the benefit this brings to the individuals or LFRS but the continued strong performance on relatively low rates of absence, despite what are challenging times, are testimony to the fact that the current approach works.

There is no cost to LFRS for the Charity's services and only a nominal cost to the individual on some occasions. The Charity receives no regular government funding. It has, however, benefitted from the charitable distribution of fines levied due to fixing of LIBOR rates in the City. The Charity is dependent on donations from the fire community and members of the public. Currently, the main ways of fundraising are through 'regular giving' deducted from wages, a Charity lottery and fundraising events, the most pronounced of which are the car washes that take place in March and September each year. Support for all Charity activities is purely on a volunteering basis with individuals using their own time, which is the same arrangement as all other charities.

Given the benefit the Charity provides to the Service there is some discretion regarding the involvement of on duty staff in fundraising activities, particularly when these are combined with a fire safety message or, for example, the offer of a Home Fire Safety Check (HFSC), or checking the safety of vehicle tyres during car washes.

In addition to car washes there are other annual fundraisers, for example the Burnley and Chorley 10k runs, a Fireworks display and fundraisers organised by recruits and UCLan students at the Service Training Centre. These events do much to enhance the reputation of LFRS as a more outward looking, altruistic service, volunteering to support charitable causes. Monies raised are sometimes split 50:50 with local charities. It is important that we support and promote such activities that are an important tool in raising morale.

More recently, following Grenfell Tower, the Fire Fighters Charity provided emotional support in the form of mental health programmes to personnel requesting it. Some of these were arranged so that whole watches could attend together. This level of support and capacity cannot be overestimated. It is similar to having a health insurance policy you hope to never have to use.

The Fire Fighters Charity has also been used by the Service to incentivise responses to the most recent staff survey. After having low levels of returns to previous initiatives, it is hoped that the Service offering to donate £1 for every completed survey will increase submissions and give the Service a clearer picture of the views of its staff.

The efforts and commitment of LFRS is recognised by the Charity. LFRS is highly regarded for its commitment to the Fire Fighters Charity. In the last national Spirit of Fire Awards held in 2015 Lancashire was one of three FRSs to be nominated as Service of the Year. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful on that occasion. The

national awards have been reintroduced this year and LFRS has again been nominated in the Service of the Year Category. We also have two further nominations.

### **Financial Implications**

None arising from this report.

### **Sustainability or Environmental Impact**

The Fire Fighters Charity supports and manages clothing recycling drop off points situated on some LFRS fire stations.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

None arising from this report.

### **Human Resource Implications**

Staff will continue to use their own time to support the Fire Fighters Charity.

### **Business Risk Implications**

The Fire Fighters' Charity provide their own insurance for fundraising events, providing 50% of monies raised goes to the Charity.

### **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

#### **List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate:		