1.0 **Purpose of Report**

1.1 The committee has requested an update on the review of the Disaster Relief Fund and the processes for the allocation of funds in emergencies. The Disaster Relief Fund is under the governance and management of Forever Manchester, a charitable organisation. Although local authority officers do not administer the fund and have not led the review, the AGMA Civil Contingencies and Resilience Unit (CCRU) has worked alongside Forever Manchester to support the review and to prepare this report for the committee.

1.2 The purpose of this report is therefore to update the Statutory Functions Committee about the proposed arrangements for the GM Disaster Relief Fund.

2.0 **Introduction**

2.1 In 2009 AGMA transferred the GM Disaster Relief Fund to the stewardship of Forever Manchester. The fund had originated after the Woolworth’s fire in Manchester in 1979. Although intended initially to support people in hardship following emergencies, following receipt of Charity Commission advice, the use of the fund was broadened by AGMA to include supporting individuals in extreme need. The fund made substantial payments to Salford City Council and to Oldham City Council following the Irlam and Shaw gas explosions in 2010 and 2012 respectively.

2.2 Following the transfer of the fund, Forever Manchester has maintained an annual reporting arrangement to the Statutory Functions Committee which requested a review of the fund in 2013 including returning the fund to being used to support people after emergencies rather than in cases of individual hardship. The Forever Manchester Board of Trustees was content to act on this recommendation and to commission a review which is nearing completion.

3.0 **Fund Balance**

3.1 The fund balance is currently c. £164,000 with a £200k endowment generating small amounts of income through dividend.
4.0 Fund Review

4.1 The review of the Disaster Relief Fund has explored:

- The overall purpose of the fund
- The definition and declaration of emergencies for the purpose of accessing funds
- The membership of the panel recommending payment or otherwise of funds to applicants
- Donations to the fund
- Publicity for the fund

5.0 Proposals

5.1 The major outcomes arising from the review are as follows:

1. for the fund to be reserved for use in emergencies affecting communities rather than for individual cases of hardship arising for other reasons
2. the definition of a qualifying emergency to include the definitions within the Civil Contingencies Act 2004; national Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) guidance and the Greater Manchester Resilience Forum’s Generic Response Plan but also to allow for a judgement to be made in specific emergencies based on expert assessment at the time by either the Chair of GMRF; the duty Assistant Chief Constable; or the Head of AGMA CCRU
3. the application form to be strengthened to allow for greater clarity about the purpose for which funds are sought, recognising that in an emergency precise details may not be clear, together with encouraging staged payments as needs emerge rather than large payments upfront
4. the expert panel that provides recommendations to Forever Manchester on the payment or otherwise of funds to applicants to be reconstituted with the panel consisting of individuals who have prior knowledge of civil contingencies and the management of emergencies; have had financial responsibilities at a senior level; and who have a connection to Greater Manchester. In addition to 3 – 4 independent panel members, this panel is also recommended to include the Chair or Deputy Chair of the Statutory Functions Committee, the lead AGMA Leader for Civil Contingencies and the lead AGMA Chief Executive for Civil Contingencies. In order to avoid conflicts in interest in recommending payments whilst ensuring there are sufficient panel members to exercise the function, where these positions fall to one local authority, appropriate delegation mechanisms should be used to identify an appropriate deputy in agreement with Forever Manchester. Forever Manchester will retain the right to appoint alternative panel members.
5. to seek appropriate approvals for the Chair of the Statutory Functions Committee, together with the lead AGMA Leader and the lead AGMA Chief Executive for civil contingencies, to sit on the panel
6. to ensure staff within the AGMA CCRU have the knowledge to recommend that local authorities consider recourse to the fund to support their communities in an emergency
7. to enable reporting on spend post allocation to allow for any unspent monies to be returned to the fund
8. to encourage local authorities who may establish a charitable fund in an emergency to allow for any unspent funds post-emergency to be transferred to the Disaster Relief Fund for the benefit of people affected by disasters in GM

6.0 Decision Process

6.1 Expenditure within the Fund is determined by the Board of Trustees of Forever Manchester. The arrangements for the Fund propose to continue the current process, albeit refreshing several areas for purposes of assurance and audit:

1. An application is made on behalf of an affected community by the local authority concerned
2. In the absence of the declaration of a formal major incident or an emergency, rapid advice on the nature of the incident is sought from a key responder (see item 2 above)
3. The application is circulated to the expert panel to make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees
4. Board of Trustees reviews panel recommendation and ratifies
5. Payment is made to the applying local authority

6.2 These proposals seek to meet a number of principles including:

- rapid transfer of funds to those in need
- assurance for the Board of Trustees that they have consulted appropriate experts
- protection of the Fund for the purposes for which it was established

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 The Committee is recommended to:

1. note the contents of this report and to agree the proposal for a representative of the Statutory Functions Committee (Chair or Deputy Chair), together with the lead AGMA Leader for civil contingencies to sit on the panel.
2. refer the proposals for the panel to Forever Manchester’s Board of Trustees to consider and agree.