

<p>Notes of the Member Development Working Group</p>

**14th February, 2011 at 12.10 pm,
at Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham**

Present: Councillor K Foster (Chair);
Councillors Idrees, Hodgson and Jackson.

Charter Assessor – Councillor Spence.

Officers: **West Midlands Fire Service**
Assistant Chief Officers A Brandon (Director Corporate Services) and D Johnson (Director Human Resources).
C Kelly.

Clerk to the Authority
G Wythes.

Apologies: Councillors Bennett, Chambers and Turner.

1/11 **Notes of 29th November 2010**

Resolved that the notes of the meeting held on 29th November, 2010 be approved as a correct record.

2/11 **Section 41 Member Role Description**

The Group received a proposed role description for members appointed as lead members for their constituent authorities under Section 41 of the Local Government Act, 1985. The role description would be circulated to the seven district authorities prior to their annual meetings to assist them in making their appointments to the Authority.

Members considered the draft role description, and felt that in addition to the statutory requirement to answer questions put to the Section 41 member at council meetings relating to the discharge of the functions of the Fire Authority, the role description should also indicate that Section 41 members would report back to their authorities as appropriate, in accordance with any requirements of their home authority's procedural standing orders, overview and scrutiny process or other monitoring arrangements.

Resolved to recommend to the Authority that the following statement in respect of the role of the Section 41 member be added to the Councillor Role Description approved by the Authority on 14th February, 2010:

‘In addition to the responsibilities and competencies set out in the member role description set out below, members appointed as lead members for their constituent authorities under Section 41 of the Local Government Act 1985 will be required to answer questions put to them at meetings of their constituent council relating to the discharge of functions of the Fire and Rescue Authority, as well as reporting back to their authorities as appropriate, in accordance with any requirements of their home authority’s procedural standing orders, overview and scrutiny process or other monitoring arrangements.

3/11 **Member Buddy Scheme**

The Group on 20th September, 2010 [Note 10/10] had suggested that a ‘buddy system’ be established whereby new members would be allocated an officer as their first point of contact for queries and information. An outline of the buddy system operated by Sandwell Council was submitted for consideration. The Group was also asked to consider whether mentoring by an established member would assist new members.

The Group felt that the political groups had a role to play in mentoring new Members, but that induction needed to be tailored to the needs of the incoming member, who might already have considerable experience as a councillor and may have previously served on the Authority. Induction for incoming lead members was now more structured.

On balance the Group felt that the current arrangements for new Member induction sessions in June/July each year were sufficient, and that those meetings would be used to signpost new members to appropriate contacts in Headquarters and the Clerk’s office who could provide a buddy service if required.

Resolved that no further action be taken with regard to developing a formal buddy arrangement for new members.

4/14

Member Handbook

The Group received a list of documents proposed to be included in an electronic members' handbook that could be accessed from the Authority's website.

It was proposed to include a number of these documents in a short hard copy version of the handbook that could be circulated to new members on appointment.

Resolved that the contents of the Members' Handbook be approved [electronic version and short form] subject to hard copies of the electronic version being made available on request to members who are not able to access a computer or who have any special requirements.

(Meeting ended at 12.25 pm)

<p><i>Contact Officer: Georgina Wythes Democratic Services Unit Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council 0121 569 3791</i></p>
