

**Notes of the Member Development Working Group**

**20<sup>th</sup> September, 2010 at 12.15 pm**  
**at Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham**

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

Charter Assessor – Councillor Spence.

**Officers:** **West Midlands Fire Service**  
Assistant Chief Officers A Brandon and D Johnson.

**Clerk to the Authority**  
G Wythes.

**Apology:** Councillor Turner.

8/10 **Notes of Last Meeting**

**Resolved** that the notes of the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> April, 2010 be received.

9/10 **Current position**

The Group was advised that the Authority at its meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2010, had approved the Member Development Strategy.

A self assessment of evidence that the Authority had in place, or was working towards, in pursuance of the primary level of the West Midlands Member Development Charter was submitted.

The Authority had been receiving support and advice from the Member Development Adviser at Improvement and Efficiency West Midlands (IEWM) in pursuance of the Member Development Charter at no cost to date. The Clerk had been informed that due to the expiry of IEWM funding for the post of Member Development Adviser, the future maintenance of the Charter and associated member development work would need to self financing from January 2011. No information was currently available on the likely costs involved.

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Members were of the view that the principles behind the Charter were good but these needed to be balanced against the cost of the formal process. The Authority's resources might be better spent on progressing member development rather than meeting the cost of pursuing the Charter.

The Group suggested that an audit of members' training in their home authorities be carried out, followed by a gap analysis to reveal what additional or bespoke training was needed to fill those gaps or make the training relevant to the specific requirements of the Fire Authority.

### **Resolved:-**

- (1) that consideration of the schedule of evidence be deferred for a further report on the future administration of the West Midlands Member Development Charter;
- (2) that the Clerk contact members' home authorities to request their training record for the purpose of carrying out a gap analysis and feeding the results into the Member Development Programme.

### 10/10 **Members' Handbook**

The Group considered a list of documents proposed to be included in a Members' Handbook that would be available electronically on the Committee Management Information System (CMIS) and on CD ROM by request.

The Group indicated that information on the West Midlands Regional Management Board and the West Midlands Regional Control Centre could be excluded from the handbook material.

Whilst the Group were content for the full content suggested to be included on CMIS or available on CD ROM, Members also felt that newly appointed members would benefit from a condensed user friendly version of this information in paper form for easy reference, including key constitutional information such as the schedule of meetings; a snapshot of governance arrangements; how meetings are conducted; key contacts at Headquarters and at Sandwell Council.

The Group also suggested that a 'buddy system' should be established whereby new members would be allocated an officer as their first point of contact for queries and information.

Members also suggested that detailed constitutional and other information and copies of agenda and minutes should be kept in a

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library facility within Headquarters which would be accessible to Members for research and meeting preparation.

**Resolved** that a further report be submitted in due course with regard to the issues outlined above.

### 11/10 **Work Programme**

The Group noted its work programme.

**Resolved** that the development of a role description for fire authority members and Section 41 members be added to the work programme.

### 12/10 **Draft Training Evaluation Forms**

The Group considered a draft training evaluation form. The Group felt that this form should be completed in respect of all external training costing in excess of £100.00. It was also suggested that a template be provided to assist members in making their reports.

**Resolved** that, subject to the comments outlined above, the evaluation form be approved.

### 13/10 **Draft Schedule of Training Activities 2010/11**

The Group considered a draft schedule of Member training activities for 2010/11.

It was suggested that a template be provided for Members to complete when making their monitoring visits to their local fire stations. It was also suggested that Members be encouraged to attend on occasions when fire stations were hosting visits from young people.

It was felt that attendance at Leadership Academy events should be limited in view of the costs involved, and that nominations to such events should be the outcome of the Personal Development Review (PDR) process where a specific benefit was proven. Members also felt that the overall budget position should be taken into account in deciding whether to proceed with such expensive training events.

It was noted that outcomes from personal development reviews would need to be analysed and incorporated into the schedule as appropriate.

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**Resolved:-**

- (1) that the draft schedule of training activities for 2010/11 be approved, subject to the issues raised above;
- (2) that members be asked to return their PDR/skills audit forms to the Clerk by mid-November 2010 to allow their training requirements to be incorporated into the schedule of training activities.

(Meeting ended at 1.03 pm)

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