

Appendix A - West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA)

Member Development Strategy 2025–2028

1. Introduction

The West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA) recognises the critical role that its members play in shaping the strategic direction, governance, and accountability of the Fire and Rescue Service. As elected representatives, members bring a wealth of experience, insight, and community connection that is vital to ensuring the service remains responsive, inclusive, and forward-thinking.

This Member Development Strategy 2025–2028 sets out a comprehensive and forward-looking approach to supporting members in fulfilling their responsibilities effectively. It reflects the increasing complexity of the fire and rescue landscape, including evolving risks, financial pressures, and the growing importance of inclusive leadership and community engagement.

The strategy builds upon previous development frameworks and incorporates best practice from across the fire and rescue sector, as well as guidance from the Local Government Association (LGA), the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), and the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England. It also responds to feedback from members and officers, as well as recommendations made as part of WMFRA's Governance Improvement Journey, supported by the Corporate Governance Improvement Board. It recognises the need for a more personalised, strengths-based, and accessible approach to development.

By investing in member development, WMFRA aims to:

- Strengthen governance and decision-making
- Enhance members' confidence and capability in their roles
- Promote a culture of continuous learning and reflective practice
- Ensure alignment with the strategic priorities of West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS)

- Support members in championing equity, diversity, and inclusion across the organisation and the communities it serves

This strategy is a living document and will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant, impactful, and responsive to the needs of members and the wider service.

2. Vision and Purpose

Our vision is to empower all WMFRA members to lead with confidence, integrity, and insight—drawing on their unique experiences, perspectives, and community connections to shape a safer, more resilient West Midlands.

This strategy is rooted in the belief that effective member development is not only about acquiring knowledge, but also about fostering leadership, collaboration, and innovation. It recognises that members play a pivotal role in ensuring the Fire and Rescue Service remains accountable, inclusive, and responsive to the diverse needs of the communities it serves.

The strategy supports members in upholding the highest standards of conduct, aligned with the Code of Conduct and the Authority's values.

The Member Development Strategy supports and complements the strategic aims of West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS), which include:

- **Making the West Midlands safer, stronger, and healthier** through proactive risk reduction and community engagement.
- **Delivering excellence in governance and community risk management**, ensuring decisions are informed, transparent, and evidence based.
- **Championing inclusive leadership and innovation**, enabling members to lead with empathy, challenge constructively, and drive continuous improvement.

By aligning member development with these aims, the strategy ensures that elected members are equipped not only to fulfil their statutory duties, but also to act as ambassadors for the service.

3. Strategic Objectives

This strategy aligns with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England and promotes cross-authority collaboration to share best practices, strengthen governance, and enhance member capability across the sector.

The strategy is underpinned by the following objectives, each designed to ensure that member development is purposeful, inclusive, and impactful:

1. Align member development with strategic outcomes

Member learning will be directly linked to WMFS's strategic priorities, including community risk management, climate resilience, and inclusive leadership. Development activities will be designed to support members in making informed decisions that contribute to a safer and stronger West Midlands.

2. Foster a member-led development culture through co-design and peer learning

Members will actively shape the development programme through the Member Development Steering Group and feedback mechanisms. Peer learning, mentoring, and shared experiences will be central to the approach, encouraging collaboration and mutual support.

3. Embed inclusive, accessible, and blended learning pathways

Training will be delivered through a mix of in-person sessions, digital platforms, and self-directed resources. Accessibility will be prioritised, with content tailored to different learning styles, needs, and schedules—including support for neurodiverse members and those with additional requirements.

4. Promote successful and ethical leadership, transparency, and a positive organisational culture

Development will support members in modelling behaviors aligned with the Nolan Principles, fostering trust, openness, and accountability in all aspects of governance.

5. **Recognise and build on members lived experience and leadership strengths**

The strategy moves beyond traditional skills audits to embrace a strengths-based model. Members' civic, professional, and community experiences will be valued and used to inform personalised development pathways.

6. **Measure impact through meaningful KPIs and reflective evaluation**

A robust evaluation and appraisal framework will track engagement, satisfaction, and outcomes. This includes baseline metrics, longitudinal tracking, and qualitative feedback. Annual reporting will ensure transparency and continuous improvement.

4. Key Principles

This strategy is guided by a set of core principles that reflect WMFRA's commitment to inclusive, effective, and forward-thinking member development:

Leadership-Focused: Development will emphasise the behaviours, mindset, and skills required to lead the organisation with strategic clarity, influence, and impact. This includes successful and ethical leadership, transformational thinking, and cultural stewardship—actively shaping and sustaining a positive organisational culture that reflects WMFRA's values and priorities.

Inclusive and Accessible: All members will have equitable access to development opportunities, delivered in multiple formats and tailored to individual needs—including support for neurodiverse members and those with additional requirements.

Strengths-Based: The approach builds on each member's unique experiences, perspectives, and leadership strengths, rather than focusing solely on gaps. This fosters confidence, impact, and personal growth.

Member-Led: The development programme will be co-designed with members through the Member Development Steering Group and regular feedback, ensuring relevance, responsiveness, and ownership.

Ethical and Transparent: Development will support members in fostering trust, transparency, and respectful engagement - recognising that strong leadership is built on clarity, confidence, and constructive challenge.

Strategically Aligned: All development activities will be linked to WMFS's strategic priorities—such as governance, community risk management, climate resilience, and inclusive leadership—to ensure learning contributes directly to organisational goals.

Continuous: Member development is an ongoing process, supported through annual experience audits, personal development conversations, and reflective evaluation throughout each member's term.

5. Core Components

5.1 Experience Audit

Replacing the traditional skills audit, the Experience and Strengths Profile captures each member's leadership roles, committee experience, sector knowledge, and personal values. This forms the basis for personal development conversations with Group Leaders and informs tailored learning pathways.

5.2 Member Induction and Onboarding

An annual induction session is delivered post-AGM and is mandatory for new or returning members. It will be delivered by the Head of Paid Service (CEO/CFO), Section 151 Officer (Treasurer), Monitoring Officer, and Clerk.

It will cover:

- How to lead successfully: role modelling, ethical decision making and influencing organisational culture.
- Service structure, strategy, vision and purpose
- Key service developments
- Financial environment
- Interests and Gifts and Hospitality
- Code of Conduct
- Governance processes and Constitution

Members will receive a briefing document and have the opportunity for Q&A. Specific committee training will be provided based on appointments.

There will also be a follow up session that will take place in September or October.

Members with leadership responsibilities will receive an enhanced induction, including standards, decision making, constructive leadership practices, strategic briefings on governance culture, successful leadership, and the Code of Conduct.

5.3 Role-Specific Learning Pathways

Modular development is provided for Committee Chairs, Audit and Risk, Pensions, Appeals Committees, and Member Champions. This ensures members are equipped for their specific responsibilities.

There will also be a Leadership Induction Pathway for committee chairs which will explore the complexities of decision-making, the role of confidence and resilience, and how leaders can navigate challenges while maintaining transparency and trust.

The Authority Chair and Vice-Chair, in recognition of their leadership role and in particular responsibility for representing the authority will be supported with additional training and support on communications, press and overall authority management.

5.4 Blended and Digital Learning

Members have access to structured e-learning via LGA and WMFS platforms, external providers, webinars, virtual briefings, and downloadable workbooks. This supports flexible and self-paced learning.

5.5 Peer Learning and Networking

A Member Development Steering Group will co-design the programme. Opportunities for shadowing, mentoring, and joint sessions with senior officers and other authorities will be promoted.

Station Visits

All elected Authority Members are expected to visit fire stations in their local area at least twice per year.

Visits should be coordinated via Ops Commanders or Democratic Services and include:

- Meeting crews
- Touring facilities
- Discussing local issues

Members are encouraged to invite local MPs or councillors and must arrange

visits in advance. Unannounced visits are discouraged.

Shadowing Opportunities

Members may arrange to spend a day shadowing a watch at a local station.

Activities may include:

- Training
- Prevention visits
- Operational response

These experiences will be tailored to individual members' interests, capability and availability. Again, visits should be coordinated by Ops Commanders or Democratic Services.

5.6 Inclusive Leadership and Accessibility

EDI principles are embedded in all training. Sessions are offered in multiple formats and additional support is provided to underrepresented members to ensure equitable access.

6. Evaluation and Impact

A Member Development Impact Framework will track engagement, satisfaction, and outcomes. Key indicators include:

- % of members completing induction and core modules
- Feedback scores and qualitative reflections
- Case studies of impact on governance and decision-making
- Annual Member Development Report to ASA Committee

7. Governance and Delivery

The Clerk and Democratic Services Team will lead programme delivery. Group Leaders will conduct personal development conversations and appraisals. The Member Development Steering Group will oversee implementation and conduct annual reviews.

Risks to delivery such as low engagement and resource constraints will be identified and mitigated. A continuous feedback loop will be established to gather member input throughout the year.

8. Next Steps

- Establish the Member Development Steering Group (from November 2025)
- Launch the Experience Audit and development conversations (Winter 2025/26)
- Publish the first Annual Member Development Report (Summer 2026)

Appendix 1:

WMFRA Member Experience Audit Template

Purpose: This template is designed to capture the lived experience, strengths, and leadership background of members to inform personal development conversations and tailored learning pathways.

Member Details

Name:

Local Authority:

Political Group:

Years of Service on WMFRA:

Leadership and Governance Experience: Please describe any leadership roles you have held (e.g. council cabinet, scrutiny chair, voluntary sector leadership):

Committee and Board Experience: Please list any committees or boards you have served on (e.g. audit, pensions, scrutiny):

Professional experience: Please outline any relevant experience from your professional life (e.g. people management, financial management)

Sector Knowledge and Expertise: Please outline any professional or lived experience in sectors relevant to fire and rescue (e.g. housing, health, finance, education):

Community and Civic Engagement: Please describe any community roles, civic duties, or voluntary work that inform your perspective as a member:

Learning Preferences and Strengths: What are your preferred learning styles (e.g. visual, experiential, discussion-based)? What personal strengths do you bring to your role on WMFRA?

Personal experience: Please what personal experiences, skills or interests you have which are relevant to your role.

Development Interests: Are there specific areas you would like to develop further (e.g. governance, resilience, EDI)?

Date Completed:

Reviewed by Group Leader:

Appendix 2:

WMFRA Member Development Steering Group - Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The Member Development Steering Group (MDSG) exists to co-design, oversee, and evaluate the Member Development Strategy and Programme for the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA).

2. Objectives

- Ensure member development aligns with WMFRA strategic priorities
- Promote a strengths-based, inclusive approach to member learning
- Support the implementation of the Experience Audit and development conversations
- Monitor engagement, impact, and feedback from development activities
- Recommend improvements and innovations in member development

3. Membership

The Steering Group will consist of:

- One representative from each political group
- The Chair of WMFRA (or nominee)
- The Clerk or Governance Support Officer
- Up to two co-opted members with relevant experience (optional)
- Officer support from Democratic Services and Learning & Development

4. Responsibilities

- Review and update the Member Development Strategy annually
- Oversee the Experience Audit process and personal development conversations
- Advise on the content and format of induction and learning modules
- Receive and review the Annual Member Development Report
- Champion inclusive and accessible development opportunities

5. Meetings and Governance

The Steering Group will meet quarterly, with additional meetings as required. Notes of meetings will be shared with the ASA Committee. The Clerk will provide secretariat support.

6. Reporting

The Steering Group will report annually to the ASA Committee via the Member Development Report, summarising engagement, impact, and recommendations.

Appendix 3:

Role-Specific Learning Pathways

This appendix outlines tailored learning pathways for key member roles within WMFRA, drawing on best practice from the sector.

1. Core Component – Applicable to All Members

Focus Areas:

- WMFRA Strategy and CRMP
- Governance and Accountability
- Code of Conduct, Behaviours, successful Ethical Leadership and Culture
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)
- Community Risk Management
- Climate Resilience and Sustainability
- Digital and Data Literacy
- Emergency Planning and Resilience

Learning Methods:

- LGA e-learning modules
- WMFS briefings and webinars
- Peer-led workshops
- Experience audit and development conversations
- Shadowing and mentoring opportunities

2. Committee Chairs

Responsibilities: Lead committee meetings, ensure effective governance, facilitate discussion, and drive strategic oversight.

Learning Pathway:

- Leadership behaviors and ethical governance – covering standards, constructive leadership practices, organisational culture and facilitation skills
- Governance and decision-making frameworks

- Conflict resolution and consensus building
- Sector-specific strategic briefings

3. Audit and Risk Committee Members

Responsibilities: Oversee financial controls, risk management, and internal audit processes.

Learning Pathway:

- Financial oversight and audit principles including Treasury Management
- Strategic risk register analysis
- Internal control mechanisms
- External and Internal audit engagement
- Fraud

4. Pensions and Appeals Committee Members

Responsibilities: Review pension cases, appeals, and ensure legal compliance.

Learning Pathway:

- Legal frameworks and pension regulations
- Case review and ethical decision-making
- Appeals procedures and governance

Source: County Durham & Darlington FRA – Pensions Committee training

5. Scrutiny and Challenge Roles

Responsibilities: Provide constructive challenge, review performance, and ensure accountability.

Learning Pathway:

- Performance analysis and benchmarking
- Scrutiny techniques and questioning skills
- Policy review and evaluation
- Governance and transparency principles

These pathways will be reviewed annually and updated in consultation with the Member Development Steering Group.