

7. Member Learning and Development Strategy

Purpose of report

1. To obtain views of the Committee with regard to a 3 year strategy to drive forward the learning and development of Authority Members.
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Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- i) considers the draft Member Learning and Development Strategy attached at Appendix 1 and in particular considers the following areas:*
 - a. potential themes for Member Development over the next 3 years;*
 - b. key competencies for Authority Members;*
 - c. key decisions that Members will need to make over the next 3 years and beyond, and where they will need specific support and information; and*
 - d. any areas of training that should be made compulsory.*
- ii) recommends the draft Member Learning and Development Strategy to the Authority for approval;*
- iii) put forward any further views to the Member Development working Group.*

Introduction and Background

2. The Code of Corporate Governance requires that arrangements are put in place to ensure that the capability and capacity of Members is developed to enable them to carry out their roles effectively.
3. A programme of development and support is led by Committee and Members' Services. The programme includes an annual training programme that aims to ensure Members are properly trained to carry out their roles as Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority.
4. As is good practice, the previous Clerk adopted a Member-led approach, by setting up a Member Development Working Group, comprising of Authority representatives from each political group. Each annual programme is reviewed by gathering feedback from Members on both individual sessions and the annual programme as a whole. The terms of reference is attached at Appendix 2.

5. Members are surveyed as to their training needs for the forthcoming year and requests are built into the programme where appropriate. Feedback is also sought from Officers involved in facilitating sessions and analysis discussed by the Member Development Group.
6. The Development Programme comprises an annual Induction for new Members, which includes the legislative framework for Fire and Rescue Services and an initial session on the Members' Code of Conduct. The Induction is also a useful refresher for existing Members to keep updated with changes in the Service.
7. The Programme provides a range of seminars on core issues to which all Members are invited. It aims to provide opportunities for Members to improve their knowledge and skills in relation to their role as key decision-makers and links in with key objectives as set out in the Authority Plan.
8. In addition to the core programme there have been sessions for Members with specific roles e.g. Audit Committee Members. Opportunities are provided for all Members to remain up to date with operational developments in service delivery through equipment demonstrations, station open days and to be kept apprised of issues as they arise through briefings and the Members' Bulletin.
9. The annual programme aims to be Fire Authority specific and complimentary to the programmes provided to Members by their constituent authorities.

Supporting and Developing Members

10. Although work is undertaken to provide Members with development opportunities on an annual basis, there is a lack of a longer term strategic vision for Members' learning and development. Other Fire and Rescue Authorities such as West Midlands, Cheshire and Merseyside have Member Development Strategies in place and it is recommended that prior to the local elections in May 2013 the Authority should adopt a Member Learning and Development Strategy to ensure that:
 - there is a commitment from the political and managerial leaders to drive Member development forwards;
 - Member development is aligned to the longer term needs of the organisation e.g. Medium Term Financial Plan, Community Risk Management Plan;
 - resources are secured to ensure opportunities are available to Members; and
 - the expectations the Authority has of its Members are clearly set out.
11. The theme for the 2012/13 Member Development Programme is Operational Response and Training and has incorporated Members' requests to learn more about the role of firefighters, firefighter training and equipment. It would be useful to identify further themes for Members' Training over the next three years.

12. Potential themes could be highlighted by identifying any complex and challenging decisions that Members will have to make over the next three years and how they can be supported and prepared in their role as decision makers.
13. The Member Learning and Development Strategy identifies that key competencies should be set out for Members, including those areas that may be compulsory for specific roles. For example, Ethical Framework sessions could be made compulsory for key Members such as Group Leaders and Committee Chairs. This would, of course, need the backing of Group Leaders but would demonstrate that those Members in receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance have specialised knowledge.

Conclusion/Summary

14. This report proposes a three year strategy for Members' Learning and Development and recommends a draft for approval. The draft has been shared with the Member Development Champions and the Chairman of the Authority, prior to consideration by the Policy and Resources Committee on 23 January 2013, with final approval being sought at the FRA meeting on 13 February 2013.
15. The next stage will then be to involve the Member Development Group in developing a programme of learning and development opportunities for Members for the period 2013-2014 for approval by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 17 April 2013. The programme will then be implemented from June 2013.

Financial Considerations

Consideration	Yes/No	Reference in Report i.e. paragraph no.
There are financial issues that require consideration	Yes	Paragraph 12

Legal Considerations

Consideration	Yes/No	Reference in Report i.e. paragraph no.
There are legal issues e.g. contractual and procurement, reputational issues that require consideration	No	Paragraph 9

Additional Considerations

16. The table below sets out any additional issues arising from the proposals contained in this report and identifies the relevant paragraphs in the report where such issues are addressed.

Consideration	Yes/No	Reference in Report i.e. paragraph no.
Resources (e.g. Assets, ICT, Human Resources, Training & Development, Sustainability).	Yes	Paragraph 9
Strategic Policy Links (e.g. IRMP, Authority Plan, Equality & Diversity, Partnerships, Environmental Impact).	Yes	
Risk Management / Health & Safety (e.g. risk management and control measures, risk register score).	No	
Consultation with Representative Bodies	No	

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – draft Member Learning and Development Strategy 2013-16

Appendix 2 – Member Development Group Terms of Reference

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