

LANCASHIRE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

MEMBER TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP

Notes of meeting held via Teams, on Thursday, 4 November 2021.

PRESENT:

Councillors

S Morris (Chairman)
D Smith (Vice-Chair)
N Hennessy
A Kay
J Rigby

Officers

B Warren, Director of People and Development (LFRS)
Richard Edney, Senior Communications Officer (LFRS)
D Brooks, Principal Member Services Officer (LFRS)
L Barr, Member Services Officer (LFRS)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Zamir Khan. The Chairman, Stuart Morris joined the meeting at Item 4.

NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The notes of the previous meeting held on 29 April 2021 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The Vice Chairman welcomed Nikki Hennessy, and Jean Rigby as new members on the Member Training and Development Working Group.

The Director of People and Development presented the report which detailed the various means available for elected Members of the Combined Fire Authority to access training and development opportunities.

Personal Development Plans

Over the previous year, due to Covid-19 restrictions, Personal Development Plan (PDP) Reviews had been conducted virtually. With the easing of Covid-19 restrictions, PDPs had now returned to being held face to face. Ten new Councillors had joined the Authority since the April 2021 meeting of which all had an initial PDP and induction discussions. Currently 100% of Members had a PDP in place.

e-Learning

Members were encouraged through the Member Information Bulletin to view North West Employers Organisation and the Local Government Association websites to access training opportunities where available.

Members' Handbook

The handbook for the municipal year 2021/22 had now been issued to all Members.

Co-ordination of Training

Democratic Services continued to contact home authorities where relevant to co-ordinate member training and development opportunities and avoid duplication.

Member Information Bulletin

The Member Information Bulletin was considered by Officers as the key document for keeping Members updated and this was valued by Members as very informative. It set out upcoming Fire Authority meeting dates, Member Training and Development opportunities together with news and events.

Member Information Bulletin Reformat - Presentation

The Director of People and Development proposed a reformat of the Member Information Bulletin and advised that the Senior Communications Officer had been invited to attend the meeting to present to Members how staff were kept up to date via a weekly Routine Bulletin.

The Senior Communications Officer explained that the Routine Bulletin was an online platform that acted as a mini-intranet. Access was sent out via a link contained in a weekly email. It was proposed that Members moved the Member Information Bulletin to this online platform. Various headings would be customised to Members' requirements. Other benefits included that videos could be embedded, all Member information would be in one place and a search facility would be available. There would be minimal cost implications in the design of the new format and ongoing hosting which could be managed within budget.

In response to a question asked by County Councillor Hennessy, the Senior Communications Officer explained that Democratic Services Officers would be able to see the number of views of a page, however, they would not be able to see which Councillors had viewed the page. Members discussed and agreed a new format would be of benefit and should be pursued.

The Chairman, County Councillor Stuart Morris, joined the meeting at this point and the Senior Communications Officer provided him with an update on the new proposed format for the Member Information Bulletin.

Members discussed the format of the newly formatted Member Information Bulletin. The Principal Member Services Officer suggested that in addition to the information already provided in the Bulletin, information regarding the forward calendar could be made available (such as the current Bright Sparx campaign) together with advice and information that Members could forward to their constituents and partners using their social media platforms with subsequent additions reporting outcomes of campaign activity. She added that, following the release of the new revised format, Members could report on how they found it.

Councillor Dave Smith advised that once Members had seen the first Bulletin, they could bring ideas forward. Councillor Jean Rigby stated that updates on the Prince's Trust were useful.

County Councillor Nikki Hennessy asked if an officer name list with photos could be added to the new format. The Principal Member Services Officer advised that information could be taken from the Member Handbook and uploaded on the new format.

In response to a comment from County Councillor Andrea Kay for Members to report on what they were doing, the Principal Member Services Officer suggested that there could be a Member led page or section.

Councillor Jean Rigby asked when the use of the new format would begin. The Senior Communications Officer explained that work would need to be undertaken with the design company to create the template which could take 4-6 weeks. It was proposed that the newly formatted Member Information Bulletin be used from the January 2022 edition.

RESOLVED: - That Members noted and endorsed the content of the report including the development of a revised format for future Member Information Bulletins.

MEMBER TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS 2020/21

The Member Training and Development Working Group was responsible for analysing and agreeing the training needs of Members that linked to the objectives, priorities and vision of the Authority.

Members were updated on the action that had been taken in response to training needs identified from the Training Needs Analysis undertaken in 2020 and the Personal Development sessions that had been held with Members throughout 2020/21.

Members' Personal Development Plans (PDPs) had now returned to being conducted face-to-face. Democratic Services started the process of circulating review documentation to all Members.

Following consideration, Members agreed that their training needs were being met and agreed the training needs for 2021/22 as follows:

- To continue to promote Fire Safety Safe and Well Service and the work of the Member Champions;
- To continue to attend service area inductions / meetings at stations and information sessions on key issues to support decision-making;
- To maintain good attendance at all Strategy Group meetings, encouraging all Members to attend;
- To continue with the informal buddy system;
- To support the principle to use electronic systems where preferred / available;
- To attend a 'SafeDrive StayAlive' (SDSA) event.
- To support the improvement of Member communication to constituents.

County Councillor Andrea Kay expressed that she was happy with how her development had progressed from when she started. She commented that understandably during Covid-19, events at fire stations had declined. The Director of People & Development agreed to speak with County Councillor Kay at the end of the meeting to discuss her role as Member Champion for Health & Wellbeing.

In response to a question raised by County Councillor Hennessy, the Director of People & Development explained that new Members were offered a 1-2-1 meeting with the Chief Fire Officer and were encouraged to meet with area personnel as their diaries allowed. He confirmed that staff did appreciate visits but there were sometimes difficulties with availability.

To encourage those Members who wanted to visit their local fire station, County Councillor Andrea Kay queried whether it would be helpful to split the county into sections for groups of Members to be invited to attend stations in their own area and to attend other areas as convenient.

County Councillor Andrea Kay advised that she posted information in relation to health and wellbeing on her Facebook page and she had also been into high schools to talk about climate change. She had taken some of the children to a fire station to meet staff and ask questions. Councillor Dave Smith stated that he also posted Fire Service information to Facebook which he felt all Members should do as routine. The Director of People & Development stated that Member communication of Fire Service announcements to the public through social media was encouraged.

In response to a question regarding wellbeing support to firefighters and a comment from County Councillor Kay regarding therapy dogs, the Director of People & Development confirmed that Wellbeing Support Dogs were one element of the wellbeing support provided. He suggested to Members that he take a report to the Resources Committee so that Members were informed of the options available as there were a variety of measures.

In response to a query from the Chairman, who in his LCC role as Mental Health Champion for Lancashire, asked whether gymnasiums were available for staff at fire stations as one of the measures, the Director of People and Development confirmed that gymnasiums were available for staff to use.

RESOLVED: - That the Committee agreed the training development needs for 2021/22 as set out in the report.

MONITORING, REVIEW & EVALUATION OF ACTIVITIES

The report provided an update on Member Training and Development activities since the previous meeting. The report showed opportunities and outcomes of activity taken by Members to support the achievement of Service objectives or positive outcomes for communities. Some activities such as visits to local stations, involvement at local open days and other leadership events had been curtailed due to the pandemic and were now beginning to open back up to Members.

Involvement at Area Level

Local events were beginning to resume and Members would be invited to attend. The Chairman had attended a virtual wholetime Recruits Passing Ceremony in August 2021. Local fire stations were starting to ease restrictions and open up to Member visits. Members could contact area personnel to arrange a visit to their local fire stations to discuss local key issues.

IT and Mileage Claim Sessions

Members were invited to attend IT sessions for i) help with access to the Mod.gov app and private papers, and ii) Mileage claim sessions for support to input mileage claims online. Members' training sessions were held in August 2021 at Service Headquarters, Fulwood and were attended by Democratic Services, Finance and ICT Officers. Sessions were successfully attended with 14 Members attending either one or both sessions. No further issues had been identified, however, ongoing support was provided on a 1-2-1 basis by Democratic Services Officers.

Members' Visit to Cheshire Safety Central

Members had previously attended a tour around Safety Central at Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service Interactive Life Skills Education Centre. This had given Members the opportunity to view their indoor village which provided a learning environment where people of all ages could develop the skills and knowledge they required to stay safe and well in their homes and college in their local areas.

Members' evaluation of the visit was that it was informative, fascinating and educational. They felt that the facility was unique and interactive with a strong safety message. They recommended that Members visit the centre. The opportunity for a further visit had been identified on Thursday 24th February 2022 10:00am – 12:00pm which was considered appropriate by the Working Group.

Visit to North West Fire Control

Members of the Performance Committee had expressed a wish to visit North West Fire Control, Warrington. All Members were subsequently invited and visits took place on 4th October and 26th October. The visits included a presentation and tour of the Control Room. The feedback from Members was very positive and they found the visit interesting and informative.

Strategy Day Evaluation

Strategy meetings were held on 01.07.2021 and 18.10.2021. Political leaders encourage all Members to attend these informative meetings. Member evaluation included that the presentations were excellent, although at times complex, particularly for new Members and suggestions were made to the venue layout.

Annual LFRS Open Day

Members noted that the annual Service-wide Open Day at the Service Training Centre did not take place due to Covid-19 restrictions.

RESOLVED: - That the Group noted and endorsed the content of the report as presented and approved the Combined Authority Members' visit to Cheshire Safety Central.

FUTURE MEETING DATES

The next meeting of the Working Group would be held on Thursday 28 April 2022. A further meeting date was agreed for Thursday 03 November 2022.

Members agreed that future meetings of the Working Group should be held virtually. On behalf of the Working Group, the Chairman thanked the officers present for their support to Member Training and Development.

B WARREN
Director of People and Development

LFRS HQ
Fulwood