

LANCASHIRE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

MEMBER TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP

Notes of meeting held via 'Teams', on Thursday, 28 April 2022.

PRESENT:

Councillors

S Morris (Chairman)
D Smith (Vice-Chair)
Z Khan
J Rigby
J Singleton (Substitute)

Officers

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

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from County Councillor Andrea Kay and County Councillor Nikki Hennessy.

NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The notes of the previous meeting held on 04 November 2021 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

REVIEW OF MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The Authority has had a Member Training and Development Strategy in place since 2006 which had been reviewed regularly.

Members reviewed and approved the revised Strategy as presented, which included minor revisions to the Personal Development Plan (PDP).

It was acknowledged that the views of new Members were useful in assessing whether the Member training and development strategy was effective.

Members agreed that the training and development process was effective and new Members were supported by the process.

Members inquired about the possibility of undertaking physical experience of fire training which they felt would help their understanding of the work of firefighters which would be beneficial in their role. The Director of People and Development explained that experience of physical training may not be possible due to health and safety concerns and policy, however, practical demonstrations by firefighters in a safe environment had been routinely provided pre-pandemic which may possibly now be reinstated. In addition, training and development opportunities for Members included meeting with Heads of Departments and/or Principal Officers who could explain the work of the service in detail.

The Director of People advised, in response to a question raised by County Councillor Singleton, that it was hoped that open days would return to the Service in the current year although dates for these events had not been announced.

RESOLVED:- That Members reviewed and approved the Member Training and Development Strategy.

MEMBER TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT - UPDATE REPORT

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

Personal Development Plans

With the easing of Covid-19 restrictions, Personal Development Plans (PDPs) had returned to being held face to face. Ten new Councillors had joined the CFA since the April 2021 meeting of which all had received an Initial PDP and induction discussion. Of the 25 elected Members of the Authority, 100% had met with a Democratic Services Officer to draw up or review their Personal Development Plan.

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.

Members' Handbook

The handbook for the municipal year 2021/22 had been issued to all Members. The handbook for the municipal year 2022/23 would be produced following the local elections and any subsequent changes to the Authority's Membership.

Member Information Bulletin

Further to Member discussions at previous meetings, the Member Information Bulletin had now been reformatted to web-based and was accessed via an electronic link with tabs for information. Although development was ongoing, the link to the first digital Bulletin had been emailed to Members on 01 April 2022. The Bulletin would now be issued more frequently, on a monthly basis.

In addition to providing meeting dates, Member Training and Development opportunities, news and events, it was intended that the Bulletin would also provide upcoming safety campaign information for Members to forward as appropriate to their constituents and key partners using their social media channels together with reporting to Members on the success of these campaigns in subsequent issues. Members were also actively encouraged to provide information to officers for inclusion in the Bulletin and provide feedback on any improvements they would like to see. An analysis of Member use / engagement with the Bulletin would be presented to the next meeting of the Member Training and Development Working Group.

Co-ordination of Training

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

The Chairman and Councillor Smith commented that the Members' Handbook was a helpful tool for reference and information.

Thanks were given to Lynsey for ensuring Members had a Personal Development Plan in place and guiding members through the mileage claims process.

RESOLVED:- That Members noted and endorsed the content of 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 open to Members.

Attended Local Fire Stations

Members were now encouraged to contact area personnel to arrange a visit to their local fire stations to discuss local key issues. Members had undertaken local station visits since the last meeting which had included a local area induction.

Involvement at Area Level

Prince's Trust presentations had now resumed in local communities and had been attended by Members. Future dates of Prince's Trust presentations were provided to Members through the Member Information Bulletin. The Road Safety Champion along with another Member had attended Biker Down sessions, and the Health and Wellbeing Champion had taken part in climate change discussions with schools and LFRS personnel as well as attending a wellbeing dog training event.

LGA Annual Fire Conference 2021

One Member had attended the LGA Fire Conference, which had now returned to being held in-person, in Gateshead on 15 and 16 March 2022. Conference activity had included four plenaries consisting of presentations and two workshops consisting of presentations.

Events and Visits

- Visit to Safety Central, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service:
The arranged visit to Safety Central on 18 April 2022 did not take place and was the second time the visit had not taken place due to low interest.

- Annual LFRS Open Day
Open Days would return to the Service in 2022 although dates for these had not yet been confirmed. Once dates had been issued, they would be given to Members through the Member Information Bulletin.

In response to a query raised by the Chairman regarding the development of inclusivity and diversity in the Service, the Director of People & Development advised that the Service had a constant drive to improve inclusivity and diversity in the workforce which had seen positive results although there was still progress to be made. Diversity was improved through recruitment with many incentives being offered, engagement in communities being carried out and following the STRIVE values.

Members raised the issue of the date of the visit to Safety Central as it was the day before Good Friday and mid-April was a prime time for canvassing residents prior to the local elections. The Principal Members Services Officer explained that schools were given priority for visits by Safety Central following the Covid-19 pandemic leaving limited dates for Member visits.

In response to a question raised by County Councillor Singleton in relation to an annual open day this year, the Director of People & Development stated that an open day would be taking place although a date had not yet been confirmed. He would speak to TOR, (Training & Operation Review), regarding plans for the day and Members would then be advised.

The Chairman asked about the recruitment of firefighters and the length of time it took to train a firefighter before they were fully competent. The Director of People & Development explained that the Service recruited trainees ahead of vacancies to ensure sufficient cover and minimise overtime costs and holidays. The training time for Wholetime firefighters was 15 weeks at the Service Training Centre, although On-call recruits initial training was 2 weeks and they would be on an appliance following the initial training. An apprentice firefighter would be in training for up to 2 years, however, they would join an appliance from the initial 15 weeks and develop their skills on the run.

RESOLVED:- That the Group noted and endorsed the content of the report as presented.

FUTURE MEETING DATES

The next meeting of the Working Group will be held on Thursday 03 November 2022. A further meeting date was agreed for Thursday 20 April 2023.

LFRS HQ
Fulwood

B WARREN
Director of People and Development