

# Member Development from April 2012

## Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Paul Raymond, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260205 or Louise McKenzie, Assistant Fire Chief Officer on 01743 260201.

### 1 Purpose of Report

This report requests consideration of future elected Member development proposals.

### 2 Recommendations

That the Human Resources Committee agree to the proposals set out at section 5 below.

### 3 Background

At its meeting on 30 September 2010, the Committee agreed the continuing process for Member development involving the completion of individual training questionnaires. The questionnaire was issued to existing Members early in 2011 and to new Members in July 2011. We have to date received 13 replies in total, which will be discussed with group leaders in October, with a view to identifying whether any modification is required to the current training plan for the remainder of the year 2011/12. In any case, delivery of the training plan commenced in June 2011 with further sessions planned through to February 2012.

### 4 The changing context of Member development

In addition to technical competence and specific knowledge of the fire and rescue service, which is important to Members in performing their role with the Authority, the role of the elected Member in local life is evolving. The recent Localism Bill, and the white paper on Open Public Services, both indicate a trend to increased involvement as 'lead commissioner'/non executive director and 'citizen champion' in the provision and delivery of local public services. In this context it is becoming clear, that we must review the nature of our Member development, in conjunction with the constituent authorities' activities, to ensure we contribute to the development of Members' roles and skills in an appropriate way.

To this end, the Chief Fire Officer, has recently held discussions with Ashridge Business School, who are the advisors on Member development to the Local Government Improvement and Development (formerly IDeA), who have also been working with public service leaders across Shropshire Council's area, regarding the future of the role of elected Members and Member development for Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority. In light of these discussions, and in the longer term, we would propose a revised approach to Member development, which is set out at section 5 below.

In addition, however, an early opportunity has arisen to offer Members a three hour development session focussing on the role of the 'citizen champion'. We are currently investigating the options for delivery in the near future. This has meant that we have had to treat the current Member training plan as a fluid document, whereby we can move sessions to be delivered internally to accommodate the opportunity for externally facilitated sessions.

## **5 Proposals**

The following proposals are made assuming that associated costs can be met from either existing budgets, or by accessing relevant funds available through a third party source, for targeted Member development and that, therefore, there is minimal or no extra or additional cost to the Authority.

### **a) Citizen champion / non executive director**

It is proposed that Members be invited to a facilitated development session, focussing on the role of the citizen champion and non executive director as set out above.

### **b) Further development plan**

It is proposed that Ashridge Business School be approached to produce an outline method for defining and delivering relevant development for Members, reflecting the changing political environment and commencing in April 2012 for delivery in the financial year 2012/13.

### **c) Member development questionnaire**

It is proposed that on receipt of b) above, the existing member development questionnaire be refreshed to reflect current local technical need and the overarching political and managerial leadership competencies as defined by Ashridge in conjunction with the Local Government Improvement and Development.

### **d) Revised training plan for 2011/13**

It is proposed that the Committee agree that the current training plan is revised and that it is then re-issued to all members of the Authority to clarify the current timetable taking into account the changes we have made.

## **6 Financial Implications**

A budget exists for Member development and any provision would be contained within the budget set or through a combination of existing provision and accessing funding opportunities available through a third party agency. There are therefore no additional financial implications arising from this report.

## **7 Legal Comment**

Appropriate provision for training and development for Members is necessary to ensure compliance with their legal and administrative obligations; contributing to the role and functions of the Authority and taking all necessary steps to comply with the statutory duties of the Authority in performing the roles allocated to Members.

## **8 Equality Impact Assessment**

This report requests consideration of proposals for Member development over the coming year, in order to provide some direction for preparatory work by officers during the election period. Any actions arising will be targeted at identifying and meeting Members' needs. As such an equality impact assessment is not necessary at this time.

## **9 Appendix**

There are no appendices attached to this report.

## **10 Background Papers**

There are no background papers associated with this report.