MERSEYSIDE FIRE &

RESCUE AUTHORITY

MEMBERS' LEARNING AND

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
JUNE 2013 – JUNE 2016

Reviewed November 2012

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority is committed to providing learning and development that supports good governance and helps the Authority achieve its Mission of making Merseyside a safer, stronger community, with Safe Effective Firefighters.

In October 2012, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority were successful in achieving Exemplar Status of the North West Employers Member Development Charter. This achievement clearly demonstrates the Authority's continued commitment to Member development and its understanding of the benefits Member Development provides to individual Authority Members and to the decision making and leadership role of the Authority as a whole.

A varied range of topics and events, delivered in a range of formats, will ensure that the objectives of this Member Development Strategy and the requirements for sustaining Charter Status are met.

AIMS

1. To provide learning and development which supports Elected Members in the delivery of their Fire and Rescue Service role which includes setting the Authority's Mission and Aims, managing performance, and excellence in leadership.

2. To provide a learning and development service and activities, that embed excellence, reflect best practice and enable Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service to continue to be a world leader in the delivery of fire and rescue services.

3. Provide a development cycle that underpins this strategy and encompasses five broad areas of Member Development:

   - Induction

   - Core knowledge development

   - Subject specific development

   - Individual development activities

   - Bi-annual Strategy Days.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

1. To undertake a thorough training needs analysis ("One to One") at an individual Member level at least once every two years, and at Authority level on a regular basis, ie, at least twice per annum. This will:

   - Establish learning and development priorities for Members following the Individual and group training needs evaluation process.

   - Provide a programme of learning and development opportunities in line with the

priorities identified and within available resources.

- Encourage all Members (with officer support) to develop and achieve individual 'Personal Development Plans' providing leadership in the promotion of a lifelong learning culture throughout the Authority.

- Encourage all Members to attend a One to One meeting within the first three months of their appointment to the Authority, and existing Members to review their Personal Development Plan annually.

- Ensure that Members are provided with a copy of their Personal Development Plan.

- Ensure that Democratic Services are informed of all Members Personal Development Requirements, which will be built into the Development Programme.

2   To provide advice and information regarding learning opportunities in consultation with the Chair of the Authority, through the Member Development Group, Democratic Services, People & Organisational Development, and information shared electronically and verbally at meetings.

3.   To keep pace with and promote innovations in learning and development, for example, new materials and new technologies such as on-line learning and development courses, through discussion with the Member Development Group (MDG) and information passed on verbally and via email to all Members.

4.   To monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Members' Learning and Development Strategy by providing regular updates to the Authority via the MDG. Members of the MDG will feedback to their Political Group Members at their Pre-Meetings, which take place prior to full Authority Meetings.

5.   To maintain a network of "Scrutiny Members" who will form the Authority's Performance & Scrutiny Committee. Each "Scrutiny Member" will have a specific reference and will work with officers to develop knowledge and understanding within their area and share this with Member colleagues, through discussion in Political Group Pre-Meetings and during discussion of relevant topics during Authority and/or Committee meetings.

6.   To continue to embed excellence following achievement of Exemplar Status of the North West Employers' Elected Member Development Charter, to ensure that the Authority continues to sustain their commitment to the principles of the Charter. Continued excellence will be maintained by the involvement of the MDG in continuing to encourage all Members to support their learning and development and abide by the Strategy.

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

This strategy document will ensure that the roles and responsibilities of Officers and Members involved in the learning and development process are defined and that the Fire & Rescue Authority maximises its return on the investment made in learning and development activity.

To ensure that Members have an opportunity to fully engage with and influence the learning and development process a Member Development Group (MDG) forms part of the Authority's Committee Structure. The Member Development Group consists of four Members, including one from each political group. The Group meets regularly, facilitated by the Democratic Services Manager, with representation from People & Organisational Development and relevant officers present in relation to topics on the agenda. Recommendations from the Group are considered by Authority Members through the Committee process.

Learning and development activities that Members are encouraged to participate in are as follows:

- Induction events

- Approved conferences

- Sponsored conferences (not on the approved conference list)

- Learning & Development events, eg, structured "Strategy Days", Internal and External training sessions and workshops including operational training

- Individual learning and development

- Coaching and mentoring

- Scrutiny Roles – including participation in Task & Finish Groups

- Attendance at Performance & Scrutiny Committee meetings and other meetings of the Authority to which the Member is not appointed.

- Learning Lunches (bite size learning)

- Attendance at Organised Events to engage with staff, community and/ or partners

INDUCTION

All new Members will participate in an induction programme and will be mentored by other Members, with the Democratic Services Team co-ordinating the process.

New Members will be provided with an Induction Pack, that provides essential information about Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority, for example, the organisational structure, contact details for key officers, how to access sources of information such as the **www.merseyfire.gov.uk** web site, and various other documents which will help new Members to familiarise themselves with Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority. Members will also be provided with a small quick reference handbook containing contact details for fellow Members and Democratic Services and the current dates of meetings, Committee Structure, Committee Membership and appointed Scrutiny Members.

All new Members will be invited and encouraged to attend an Induction Session following their appointment to the Authority. At this Induction, they will meet with the Democratic Services Team, the Monitoring Officer/ Solicitor to the Authority, Principle Officers and other key Officers whom they are likely to have regular contact with. They will also be provided with a tour of the headquarters building and Vesty Road sites and will have the opportunity to ask Officers questions in an informal setting.

In addition, shortly after their appointment to the Authority, new Members will be invited to visit Stations within their area and be provided with information regarding Community Safety work and initiatives underway within their particular District.

Also, organised visits are arranged throughout the year, to enable all Members to visit key Authority locations and assets.

APPROVED CONFERENCES

Approved conferences can vary and are determined each year at the Annual Meeting. Member representation at these conferences will be agreed by the Monitoring Officer/ Solicitor to the Authority, in consultation with the Chair of the Authority and/ or the Vice – Chair's and Party Leaders.

Members will be required to share the knowledge acquired at these events, through the completion of a brief feedback questionnaire and/or a short presentation at Authority meetings. Democratic Services and People & Organisational Development will support Members in the delivery of this feedback, and will ensure that any feedback questionnaires completed are disseminated to Members in an appropriate manner.

SPONSORED CONFERENCES

The Monitoring Officer/ Solicitor to the Authority, in consultation with the Chair of the Authority, may also sponsor attendance at conferences and seminars other than those on the approved conference list. Sponsored Conferences will be those pertinent to a particular work stream or Members' responsibilities. The Democratic Services Manager, once notified, will provide budget authorisation for the confirmation of attendance, booking of the conference and booking of accommodation (should this be required) to take place.

Again, Members will be requested to share the knowledge acquired by providing feedback through the completion of a feedback questionnaire and/or a short presentation at Authority meetings.

For more information regarding conferences and attendance, please see the "Procedures" Section of this document.

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT EVENTS

Learning and development needs will be identified at least twice a year through analysis and evaluation of:

- Integrated Risk Management/Service Plan

- Changes in government legislation

- Changes in corporate risk

- Changes in Service provision, ie, changes in working practice/equipment, or, benchmarking exercises.

Members agree a schedule of Meetings and Development Dates at each Annual Meeting, which enables Members to programme their diaries to ensure their availability.

Two Member 'Strategy Days' will be arranged each year to provide the knowledge and understanding identified and will take the form of presentations and workshops.

"Learning Lunches" are held prior to each Policy & Resources Committee and Community Safety & Protection Committee and additionally as required, to provide concise updates on topics of interest. These activities facilitate Members development in accordance with the Fire and Rescue Authority Member Role Map (Appendix 2).

In addition, Members are invited to attend "live" exercises, to enable them to obtain an understanding of how operational elements of the service work in practice.

Members are also requested to complete an Evaluation/ Feedback Sheet for all Learning and Development activities attended. The Evaluation Sheet was amended following suggestions at the Charter Assessment visit in September 2012 that "*evaluation sheets could be made more robust to ensure that richer data is collated to help inform future programme design and delivery*".

The Evaluation Sheets are now designed to elicit from Members whether their learning and development requirements were met and provide Members with the opportunity to identify further learning and development requirements, identified as a result of the learning and development activity.

The new Evaluation Sheets were approved for implementation by the Member Development Group on the 22nd October 2012.

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Elected Members will be encouraged to undertake a process of self-reflection and have an initial one-to-one meeting with a People & Organisational Development Officer within three months of being appointed to the Authority (wherever possible, arrangements are made to facilitate this on their first day, pre/ post AGM, dependent upon the number of new Members and availability), followed up with an annual review each year of their appointment thereafter. A Learning and Development Plan will be produced as a result of this meeting and the People & Organisational Development Department will liaise with the Democratic Services Team to meet development needs.

COACHING AND MENTORING

Democratic Services can arrange for Coaching and mentoring by Officers of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, Members, or 'Scrutiny Members' to meet individual development needs, should a Member request or require it.

SCRUTINY MEMBERS

The Authority has a number of appointed "Scrutiny Members". These Members are responsible for supporting a particular service function and are required to research their appointed area and build relationships with support Officers, in order to gain greater knowledge and understanding. In turn, this knowledge should be shared with other Authority Members, through mentoring or discussion at Authority / Committee meetings.

These "Scrutiny Members", along with the appointed Committee Chair, will form the Authority's Performance & Scrutiny Committee. The increased specialist knowledge obtained by Members through this Scrutiny role contributes towards an effective scrutiny process for Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority.

In addition "Scrutiny Members" (and indeed other Members) may be required to participate in Task & Finish Groups established to look in detail at specific issues. Participation in such groups will provide Members with the opportunity to increase their knowledge of the area being reviewed.

PROCEDURES

The following procedures should apply to all learning and development events/activities:

- All conferences and external learning and development events require approval. Consequently details will be presented to the Chair of the Authority and/ or Vice-Chair's and Group Leaders, via Democratic Services, for approval and nomination of representative Members (where applicable).

- Attendance at any event should be determined according to the relevance of the event to the individual Member's role or to a personal development plan.

- In considering individual development opportunities the Member Development Group will consider how the Member's development needs links to the Fire Authority Elected Member's role map and the Member's Personal Development Plan.

- In the spirit of equal opportunities, all learning and development opportunities will be communicated to all Members via the notice board in the Elected Members' meeting room, e-mail, postal service, fax or telephone for those who do not have access to e-mail, and Democratic Services electronic calendar of events.

- Consideration of attendance at events is to be decided at a Committee Meeting of the Authority. The proximity of the event cannot be used as a reason to by-pass this process. If there is insufficient time prior to the event for this process to take place, then permission must be sought from the Chair of the Authority for the Member in question to attend the learning and development event.

- A request for learning and development will not necessarily result in approval.

- The individual Member must ensure that there is sufficient time to process their request prior to attending the event. Failure to do so may result in a claim for expenses and/or allowances being rejected. This is particularly the case for learning and development events or conferences other than those on the approved duty conference list.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR
APPROVED CONFERENCES

Approved conferences can vary from year to year and are determined by the Annual Meeting of the Authority. The Monitoring Officer/ Solicitor to the Authority, in consultation with the Chair of the Authority and/ or Vice-Chairs and Party Leaders, proposes the basis of Member representation.

The Monitoring Officer/ Solicitor to the Authority will prepare a report each year to be submitted to the Annual Meeting inviting the Authority to determine the basis of Member representation at approved professional conferences based on an assessment of the balance of the following criteria:

- Requirements for political balance, ie, that one political group does not have disproportionate access to learning and development events/activities.

- The occupational and technical competences required for attendance (Member Engagement)

- That learning and development needs of individual Elected Members have been identified through analysis/evaluation.

- Cost/benefit analysis.

Democratic Services are responsible for:

- Inviting the appropriate Members to the event.

- Processing requests for learning and development.

- Confirming attendance following the event.

- Encouraging Members to disseminate information to fellow Members following the event.

Individual Members are responsible for:

- Attending the event (or finding a suitable deputy if authorised to attend).

- Disseminating information obtained at the event.

People & Organisational Development Department is responsible for:

- Identifying suitable conferences for Members to attend in relation to their PDP requirements and seek approval through the Democratic process.

The procedures outlined on pages 6 & 7apply in all cases.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR SPONSORED CONFERENCES

The Officers of the Strategic Management Group (SMG) may also suggest that events, other than those on the approved conference list, should be attended which are pertinent to their department or a Member's responsibilities. SMG is responsible for submitting the event to Democratic Services who will identify funding prior to submission to the Chair of the Authority and/ or Vice-Chairs and Party Leaders for approval, and for administration of attendance and bookings to be processed.

Individual Members are responsible for:

- Bringing potential opportunities to the notice of The Strategic Management Group and securing their sponsorship.

- Submitting a learning and development request to Democratic Services

- Upon selection, attending the event (or finding a suitable deputy if they are unable to attend).

- Disseminating information obtained at the event.

The Strategic Management Group is responsible for:

- Considering the relevance to the Members role and benefit to the Authority for Members to attend.

- Submitting the event to Democratic Services for consideration by the Chair of the Authority and/ or Vice-Chairs and Party Leaders.

Democratic Services Department is responsible for:

- Confirming attendance following the event

- Monitoring, recording and noting the outcome of a request.

- Encouraging Members to disseminate information to peers following the event.

People & Organisational Development Department is responsible for:

- Updating individual Members personal development records following the event.

Principal Officers' Personal Assistants are responsible for :-

- Seeking approval for funding via the Democratic Services Manager, prior to agreement being sought by Members/ Officers to attend an event.

- Booking conference, travel and accommodation if appropriate.

- Advising Democratic Services of any rail travel requirements.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Personal development opportunities must link to Member competencies and be identified by individual Members and agreed with People & Organisational Development.

Individual Elected Members are responsible for:

- Discussing their learning and development needs with People & Organisational Development Department and securing approval and support.

- Attending arranged meetings with support officers to discuss personal development opportunities.

- Submitting a learning and development request form to Democratic Services.

- Attending the event after approval.

- Disseminating knowledge and understanding gained from the learning event/activity to Authority Members and/or Principal Officers.

The People and Organisational Development Department is responsible for:

- Facilitating the identification of learning and development needs through one-to-one meetings.

- Submitting requests to Democratic Services for agreement of arrangements.

- Updating individual Member's personal development records following the event

- Ensuring that the procedures outlined on pages 6 &7 apply and that training links to Member competencies.

Democratic Services are responsible for:

- Recording attendance following the event and providing information to People and Organisational Development Department

- Requesting Members to disseminate information to other Authority Members and Principal Officers following the event.

- Requesting Members to complete a form providing feedback regarding the event attended.

- Authorising and arranging funding for events and overseeing the booking and travel arrangements.

The procedures outlined on pages 6 & 7apply in all cases.

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