



AGENDA ITEM: 17

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

19th March 2007

PROGRESSING THE WALES CHARTER FOR MEMBER SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

**Report by Rhian Evans,
Member Liaison Officer**

Purpose of Report

- 1.** To seek the Authority to establish a dedicated working group to be responsible for identifying members' developmental and support needs and consequently to progress the Authority's bid to receive accreditation under the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development.
- 2.** To seek members' views on the feasibility of combining the remit of the Member Support and Development Working Group with that of the recently established Community Safety Champions Working Group.

Background

- 3.** The Wales Charter for Member Support and Development (the Charter) is an award which has been developed by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) in conjunction with local authorities to recognise authorities' achievements in member support and development. The high level objectives of the Charter are to ensure that authorities are served by effective members who work to guarantee and improve corporate governance, local democracy and local services.



Background *(continued)*

4. As the majority of local authorities were already engaging, albeit at different stages, with the unitary authorities' Charter and with a view to avoiding unnecessary duplication of services and training provision, a separate Charter was developed for fire and rescue authorities. The intention of this Charter is to recognise the specific support given to members in their role on fire and rescue authorities.
5. Members will recall that the Authority, at its meeting on 23rd October 2006, considered and approved the draft fire and rescue authorities' Charter for Member Support and Development and the associated role descriptions and person specifications. It also resolved to "pursue Charter status recognition in due course".
6. Subsequently, in its Risk Reduction Plan (RRP) for 2007/08 the Authority has identified member development as one vehicle for mitigating corporate risk. The Authority also anticipated that it would be in a position to receive the basic level Charter award before the end of the 2007/08 year.

Information

7. One of the requirements of the Charter is that authorities have in place a Member Support and Development Working Group, made up of members and officers, which will be responsible for sponsoring the members' support and development programme and strategy. In addition a Member Support and Development Champion, who will be charged with promoting the Charter amongst fellow Authority members, will also need to be appointed in due course.



Information *(continued)*

8. The establishment of such a Group within North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority at this time, in addition to supporting the Authority in its ambition of gaining Charter status, would also be responsible for moving the agenda forward and ensuring that it achieves the goal it has set itself in its RRP for 2007/08.
9. Once established one of the Group's initial tasks would be to undertake a self-assessment against the Charter's criteria to assess what measures need to be put in place before the Authority is in a position to sign a Statement of Intent to apply for Charter recognition. Once this Statement has been signed the Authority has 6 months within which to finalise its submission to the WLGA.

Community Safety Champions Working Group

10. At its meeting on 24th January 2007 the Executive Panel, in response to the unacceptable rise in the number of fire deaths in the area, resolved to appoint Community Safety Champions to serve on a Working Group. The objectives of this Group, constituting one Fire and Rescue Authority member for each unitary authority area, are to improve the way the Authority interacts at political and strategic level with the unitary authorities in terms of community safety activities and to champion the Service's community safety initiatives to fellow members.
11. In establishing this Group, members and officers alike were of the view that there is a greater role for members to play in community safety. The formation of this Group would also assist the Authority to develop closer working relationships and protocols with the unitary authorities – another one of the goals it has set itself in the RRP for 2007/08.



Community Safety Champions Working Group *(continued)*

- 12.** All the Community Safety Champions have now been appointed and the Working Group will hold its inaugural meeting in the near future. The representatives for each area are:
Conwy – Councillor Ron Peacock
Denbighshire – Councillor John Smith
Flintshire – Councillor Ted Evans
Gwynedd – Councillor Trevor Roberts
Wrexham - Councillor Ted George
Ynys Môn – Councillor John Chorlton

- 13.** Member involvement on a Working Group such as the one mentioned above would, in addition to widening the Service's perspective and approach to combating community safety matters, also aid members' personal development. It is anticipated that the Community Safety Champions Working Group will meet approximately four times a year, immediately following the Authority's quarterly business meetings.

Member Support and Development Working Group

- 14.** Members' representation on the Member Support and Development Working Group would ideally be between six and eight members, at least one Principal Officer and a representative from the Service's Skills, Learning and Development Department. The services of other officers could be called upon as and when required. Dependent upon the membership of the Group meetings could be held on the same day as either full Authority or Executive Panel meetings.



Member Support and Development Working Group *(continued)*

- 15.** Members may therefore wish to consider, as a possible option for moving the member support and development programme forward, to extend the remit of the Community Safety Champions Working Group to include Member Support and Development. Adopting this approach would have its benefits - it would be both cost effective and would demonstrate an efficient use of resources; and, whilst promoting community safety issues the Group would be in an ideal position to identify members' specific support and development needs to enable them to be effective links and ambassadors between the Service and their home authorities and vice-versa.

Recommendations

- 16.** That members:
 - 16.1** approve the establishment of a Working Group to promote and progress members' support and development;
 - 16.2** to approve combining the remit of the Member Support and Development Group with that of the Community Safety Champions Working Group; and
 - 16.3** that the Working Group is tasked with assessing the Authority's position in relation to applying for Charter recognition status and, in due course, with drafting the Authority's application for approval for submission.