



## **AGENDA ITEM: 7**

### **NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**21<sup>st</sup> December 2009**

### **WALES CHARTER FOR MEMBER SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT**

**Report by Colin Everett, Clerk to the Authority**

#### **PURPOSE**

- 1 To inform Members that the Authority has recently been accredited with the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development.

#### **BACKGROUND**

- 2 Members will recall that it was decided to apply for the Charter which was created to give structure and impetus to the growing body of support services for members in Wales. The aim of the Charter is to ensure that authorities are served by effective members working to assure/improve corporate governance, local democracy and local services.

#### **INFORMATION**

##### **Benefits to the Authority**

- 3 Working towards the Charter has enabled Members to engage more with each other as well as with officers, in terms of training, development and knowledge. Members have shown their commitment to the work of the Authority by arriving earlier for Authority meetings in order to receive training on various areas of the Service's work before the official meetings start.
- 4 Members have been invited to attend various events organised by the Service including:

- a tour of the new Joint Communications Centre;
- a road traffic collision demonstration event;
- a seminar for firefighters demonstrating new vehicle rescue equipment;
- meeting with firefighters who work various shift patterns within the Service.

5 Members are also encouraged to visit their local fire stations and especially so when the Phoenix events take place.

### **Feedback from the Review Team**

6 The review team commended the Authority for the hard work undertaken in preparing for the award by both members and officers over some time and recognised that the Authority had technically met the requirements of the Charter. The review team also felt that the Authority should be strongly encouraged to promote the principles of the Charter amongst all members and senior officers to ensure that it becomes embedded within the organisation and helps to create a sound foundation for further progress with regard to member support and development.

7 The peer review team, and the Authority's own self-assessment, identified a number of areas for further improvement.. A copy of the full report is attached at annex A.

8 At the WLGGA Member Development conference on 19<sup>th</sup> November, the award was presented to the Chair of the Authority.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

9 Members are asked to note the information provided and commend the members and officers on this achievement.

**Charter for Member Support and Development  
North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority  
Assessment Report  
October 2009**



**Background**

The Authority was assessed by the external peer team, led by the Welsh Local Government Association:

- Tim Buckle, Improvement and Governance Adviser WLGA
- Cllr Val Slater City of Bradford Council
- Cllr Bob Burns, Bridgend County Borough Council
- Neil Evans, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
- Sarah Titcombe, Organisational and Personal Development Adviser WLGA

The Authority's application was successful and Charter status will be formally awarded at the annual Welsh Member Development Conference to be held in November 2009.

This report provided to the Authority in confidence summarises the findings of the review team, highlights areas of notable and excellent practice which will be shared across local authorities as exemplars, and areas for further development to which the Authority might wish to give attention, particularly when seeking to achieve the next 'Advanced' Charter level.

**Charter Status**

North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority will have Charter status for three years, after which it will be expected to either (i) apply for reassessment at this level or (ii) apply for the next Charter level (the Advanced award)

The Authority is encouraged to display the certificate and award in a prominent location within its premises where it can be viewed by the public and visitors.

The Authority is also encouraged to display the Charter logo on appropriate documents and stationery.

**Peer Review Team Observations**

The review team would like to commend the Authority for the hard work undertaken in preparing for the award by both members and officers over some time. The review team recognised that the Authority had technically met the requirements of the Charter. However the review team also felt that the Authority should be strongly encouraged to promote the principles of the Charter amongst all members and senior officers to ensure that it becomes embedded within the organisation and helps to create a sound foundation for further progress with regard to member support and development.

In any Charter Review, there will be areas of achievement and excellence identified and areas where further improvements can be made. This constructive challenge is a critical element of the peer review and Charter process and encourages the further improvement of member development and support. There were a number of areas of notable and excellent practice which the Authority should be commended on and which should be shared with other authorities.

## ANNEX A

The peer review team, and the Authority's own self-assessment, identified a number of areas for further improvement. The following observations will assist progress towards achieving a level of member development and support that could satisfy the criteria of the Advanced Charter Award in the future.

### Notable & Excellent Practice

Practice	Observations on notable and excellent practice
<b>Strategic Approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Member Support and Development Champion is also the Chair of the Authority which therefore provides for the potential for strong leadership and support for member support and development.</li> </ul>
<b>Member Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The production of a reflective questionnaire regarding training needs was a useful tool for re-assessing the training needs of members</li> <li>▪ The Authority's contribution to the all-Wales Fire and Rescue Authorities Conference was helpful and clearly appreciated by members</li> <li>▪ The Authority provides a range of learning activities for members about fire and rescue services and policy which seemed to be of high quality and were appreciated by Members who attended</li> <li>▪ The practice of running learning events immediately prior to Authority meetings was appreciated by members</li> <li>▪ The work undertaken to date in identifying the learning needs of members was also positive.</li> </ul>

### Practice for Development

Practice	Observations on Further Improvement
<b>Strategic Approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There is a need to obtain wider involvement in, and commitment to, the Member Development Strategy from the whole Authority (members and officers). One way to begin this process could be to agenda the Member Development Strategy for a future meeting of the Authority.</li> <li>▪ Greater use could be made of the Member Development working group as a vehicle for communicating the content of the member development strategy and also discussing member support and development needs.</li> <li>▪ The review team believe that it is important that all aspects of the member development strategy link more clearly together. For example Personal Development Interviews, training needs questionnaires, role descriptions and the member development programme should all link together and contribute to establishing and supporting the needs of members for development.</li> <li>▪ Role descriptions and person specifications could be more widely used by members so that members have greater ownership of them. Greater input into, and use of, the role descriptions and persons specifications would also enable them to be more confidently used as part of training needs analysis.</li> </ul>

## ANNEX A

<b>Member Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The review team felt that it was important that the planned Personal Development Interviews for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Authority should be implemented as soon as possible.</li><li>▪ The training provided as part of the induction process could be followed up with further training in response to the planned Personal Development Interviews and needs analysis.</li><li>▪ The Authority should consider developing a database for collecting training data such as identified training needs and attendance at training events in order to assist with monitoring and evaluation of training and development activities.</li><li>▪ The review team recognised the discussions that the Authority has already made with regard to development of mentoring, however the Authority could follow this up with further discussions with members to ask them if they would like to be mentored.</li><li>▪ It was recognised that the Authority provides a number of training sessions already however the training programme could be enhanced through the provision of training on specific skills for members in areas such as governance and media training.</li></ul>
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### **Future Support from the Association**

The Association is available to support and advise the authority on the above.

### **The Development of the Charter**

The detailed criteria for the Advanced Award and third stage (Excellence) awards are in development. North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority is invited to take an active role in the continuing development of the Charter and officers and members are invited to take a role on future review teams. The Association looks forward to continuing to work with the Authority in their preparations for the next level.

### **Tim Buckle and Review Team October 2009**