

report

meeting	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY	
	POLICY AND STRATEGY COMMITTEE	
date	3 August 2007	agenda item number

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

AUTHORITY MEMBERS DEVELOPMENT – FUTURE STRATEGY & GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Members about the proposals for the future governance arrangements, for member development and succession planning within the Fire & Rescue Authority. It recommends that the remit of the Policy and Strategy Committee is changed to include this responsibility.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Following the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) carried out in 2005 the Audit Commission highlighted several aspects where improvements were required. The governance arrangements in place at that time were considered to be *'below minimum requirements'*. Since this assessment has taken place the authority has been restructured to meet the challenges that the organisation faces. This and other changes such as member champions have undoubtedly strengthened the governance arrangements. In the recent Annual Audit and Inspection Letter (March 2007) the following comment was included;

'17 *....There have been improvements to governance arrangements and members are engaged in a wide range of policy developments. This has led to a clearer understanding of the modernisation agenda. This is evident from the strong member support for tough decisions in potentially sensitive areas such as shift changes.*

2.2 In the CPA report 2005 the Audit Commission also made comments with regard to member development and succession planning as follows;

'43 *Training to support the role of members on the combined Fire Authority is weak. Although some training and member seminars are evident, there is no training needs assessment for members to direct learning and facilitate their development, Additionally, much reliance is placed upon training by members' own constituents authorities.'*

'44 *Succession planning is not part of the Fire Authority's corporate mindset. Retirement of the clerk and the uncertainties surrounding the outcome of county council elections leave the Authority exposed to a loss of corporate memory, which may affect its ability to maintain its contribution to business continuity.'*

- 2.3 In the subsequent improvement plan all the governance issues were included for ongoing development and agreed at the 'round table' meeting that took place with the Audit Commission towards the end of 2005. Member development and succession planning are the final aspects for consideration and improvement.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 To strengthen the Authority's position with regard to member development arrangements have been made for personal development reviews to take place at the end of July and beginning of August. These reviews will be conducted by consultants from the Improvement & Development Agency (IDeA). Once completed the development requirements will need to form part of a strategy for member support and development.

- 3.2 As part of the strategy it would be useful to ensure that an annual programme of development is produced and that it differentiates training and development on the basis of;

Authority level – Development activities for all members

Functional level – needs for specific committee/roles e.g. finance or community safety

Individual level – personal skills that help members carry out their roles e.g. speed reading or chairing

- 3.3 This would clearly set out important building blocks for a strategic approach towards the training and development of Authority Members. This would not only provide evidence of leadership and commitment to member development, but also demonstrate how Members appreciate the importance of their role, the support they will receive from officers and a method of deciding how resources should be targeted for the best results.

- 3.4 In deciding the best approach to development and succession planning Members could consider a strategy that includes the answers to the following issues;

- Would there be a benefit from having a two or three year Member training and development plan ;
- How do we provide a mechanism for capturing, evaluating and sharing the learning that takes place ;
- Is there a clear policy under the development strategy for Member's attendance at conferences or seminars for Authority specific matters ;
- A clear approach to succession planning – how it is to be addressed and how will Members be developed to take on leading roles ;
- How can we maximise the development opportunities through a range of methods such as self study, visits and tapping into officer training events
- How will training sessions and other development opportunities be organised and promoted to maximise attendance ;
- Are there opportunities to share development activities with City or County Council ;
- What benefits may be realised ;
- What other approaches could be taken to joint Officer and Member development.

- 3.5 Arrangements for Member development would also need to provide a mechanism for monitoring and evaluation. This would rely upon a robust information system with an officer resource to keep it up to date.
- 3.6 This would need to provide clarity about the purpose of recording such information. Some reasons will be external such as informing the Audit Commission of the investment in, and benefits from, training and development of Authority Members. Other reasons will be internal in order that judgements can be made about the impact, investment, performance management, accessibility and achievement of development objectives as well as equal opportunities monitoring.
- 3.7 Evaluation of outcomes to assess the return on investment by the Authority could include;
- Identification of the purpose and objectives at the design stage to ensure that any commissioned activities will meet the needs of the Authority and individual Members.
 - End of event questionnaires – completed and report provided for appropriate committee
 - Personal development plans – to include how these have been undertaken and supported by both the organisation and members
 - Other mechanisms to support evaluation such as statistical information number of training days provided; costs and other resources.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

To provide for the personal development interviews by the IDeA, the Service has committed £5,400 to date, this has been met within existing provisions. Any subsequent arrangements or dedicated training undertaken by any agency would need to be submitted for consideration by Members with responsibility for the aforementioned requirements.

5. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

An Officer would need to undertake the responsibility for supporting the Policy and Strategy Committee in terms of capturing the development needs, making arrangements for training events, recording success and providing information for monitoring and evaluation.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

As members are busy people any arrangements made for their personal development must allow for their specific needs. At the design stage equality of access would need to be considered. This would include aspects such as the time of day; key calendar events; travel arrangements and any other special requirements. The responsibility for governing equality would therefore fall to the Policy and Strategy Committee.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Failure to demonstrate a co-ordinated commitment for the development of its own Members would leave the Authority open to criticism by the Audit Commission in subsequent performance assessments. This could overshadow the significant progress made by the authority in changing its arrangements and the commitments made by Members to champion key aspects of the Service.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That the Policy and Strategy Committee take responsibility for the governance and direction of the arrangements, including commissioning, for Authority Members' development and succession planning.
- 8.2 That an Officer be assigned the responsibility to support the Policy and Strategy Committee in this role to include responsibility for the development of an appropriate strategy and policy.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION

- Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority - Comprehensive Performance Assessment 2005
- Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority - Annual Audit and Inspection Letter March 2007

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