

Making Cheshire Safer

Member Training and Development Group Review 2019-20

Version 1.0 – May 2020



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1. INTRODUCTION

The Authority remains committed to ensuring that all Members have access to and undertake adequate training and development opportunities to better enable them to fulfil their roles as Fire Authority Members. This report provides a review of the Member Development activities that the Authority has undertaken during 2019-20 and the work carried out by the Member Training and Development Group.

2. MEMBERSHIP AND ROLE OF THE MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT GROUP

MEMBERSHIP

The group comprises of 5 Members and 1 independent (non-elected) member and appointments are made by the Fire Authority.

Membership for 2019-20

Councillor Gina Lewis (Chair)

Councillor David Brown

Councillor David Edwardes

Councillor Karen Mundry

Councillor Stuart Parker

Lesley Thomson (independent (non-elected) member)

Note: at its Annual Meeting in June 2019, the Fire Authority agreed to appoint 5 Members to the Group.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The role of the Member Training and Development Group is:

- To advise on the development, monitoring and evaluation of a Member Training and Development Programme to ensure that Members' training needs are being met.
- To develop, monitor and review the Member Development Strategy and ensure that the Member Training and Development Programme is developed in line with the Strategy and to meet individual Member development needs.

3. MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT GROUP WORK PROGRAMME 2019-20

- 3.1 The Member Training and Development Group (the Group) usually meets on a quarterly basis to carry out its roles and functions in respect of the development, monitoring and evaluation of Member development activities for Fire Authority Members. Meetings have taken place on 12th July 2019 and 14th January 2020. Meetings were due to take place on 14th October 2019 and 24th March 2020, but due to unforeseen circumstances, both of these meetings were cancelled.

3.2 The Group plays a key role in assisting officers with Member training and development activities. Key areas of work carried out during 2019-20 include:

- Development, implementation and quarterly monitoring of the Member Development Strategy 2019-20.
- Development, implementation and quarterly monitoring of the Member Development Programme for 2019-20.
- Review of the outcomes following North West Employers assessment visit (which resulted in the Authority fulfilling the criteria for the Level 1 Review of the North West Charter for Councillor Development).
- Review/refresh of the Personal Development Review process for 2019-20
- Review of the outcomes from Personal Development Reviews conducted in 2019-20.
- Evaluation of the Induction Programme for 2019-20 and feedback from it.
- Review of the roles and responsibilities of Member Champions.

On 11th March 2020, Coronavirus was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organisation. The Government introduced social distancing and lockdown measures to protect the health and safety of the population. As a result of these measures, several meetings and training and development opportunities that were programmed from March onwards were cancelled.

4. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2019-20

4.1 The Member Development Strategy 2019-20 was approved by the Fire Authority in June 2019. The Strategy set out the Authority's strategic direction in respect of Member training and development for 2019-20.

4.2 The implementation plan for the Strategy was monitored at each meeting of the Group and a copy of the Annual Plan is attached as Appendix 1 to the review. An outline of the objectives and progress to date is detailed below:

Objective 1 – Identify and prioritise Members' Training and Development Needs

Members' training and development needs were identified through personal development review meetings. The majority of personal development review meetings took place between August 2019 and October 2019. A summary report with the outcomes from the meetings was taken to the Member Training and Development Group in January 2020.

Personal development plans were created from these review meetings and the majority of individual training needs identified have been met with one-to-one sessions with the relevant departments or officers. Training identified that was felt to be beneficial to all Members has been incorporated into the Programme for 2020-21.

General training and development needs identified from the 2019-20 personal development plans included:

- Familiarisation with stations.
 - Democratic Services have contacted the Admin Managers who facilitate Unitary Performance Group meetings to request that they offer station tours on the rise of meetings.
 - Democratic Services have also encouraged Members to attend station open days and to contact officers to arrange specific station visits.
- A tour of Workshops at Sadler Road.
 - Democratic Services have included this in the Member Training and Development Programme for 2020-21.
- Visits to North West Fire Control and Safety Central.
 - Democratic Services have ensured that visits to North West Fire Control and Safety Central are included on the Member Training and Development Programme 2020-21.
- Guidance and training regarding social media.
 - Democratic Services are in the process of arranging social media training for Members and are aiming for it to be delivered at a Planning Day in the coming months.
- Familiarisation with the Service's Human Resource areas and programmes.
 - An equality and diversity session has been included in the Member Training and Development Programme for 2020-21.

Objective 2 – Review and refresh the Members Personal Development Review process to ensure that it remains effective for both experienced Members and new Members

Officers carried out a review of the personal development review process in August 2019. The template utilised to create personal development plans was simplified and updated to ensure all elements were still relevant. It also incorporated a requirement for Members to rate their knowledge of different areas from 1-4 (1 = below the level required to 4 = outstanding) in order to ascertain areas where development was most needed. Overall, feedback from Members regarding the updated template was positive.

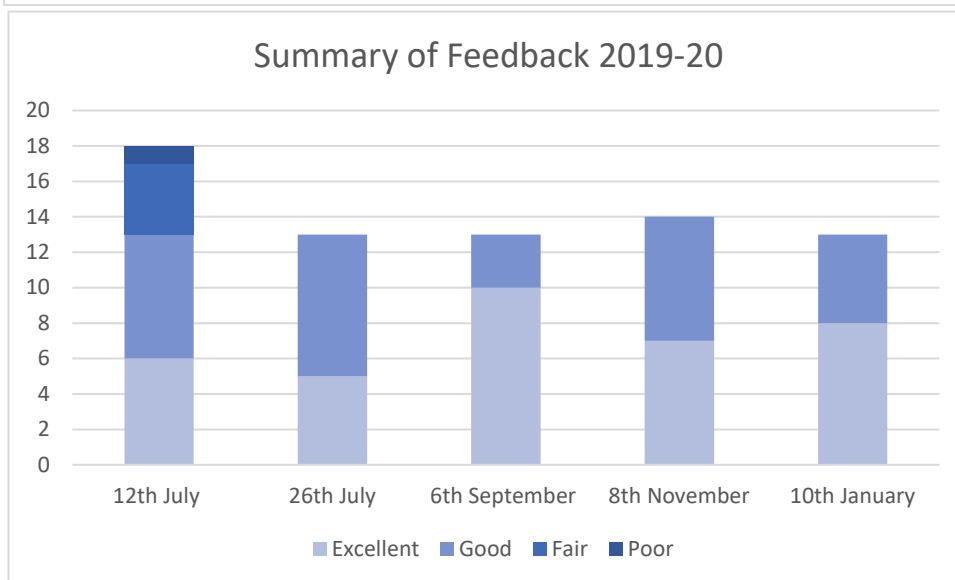
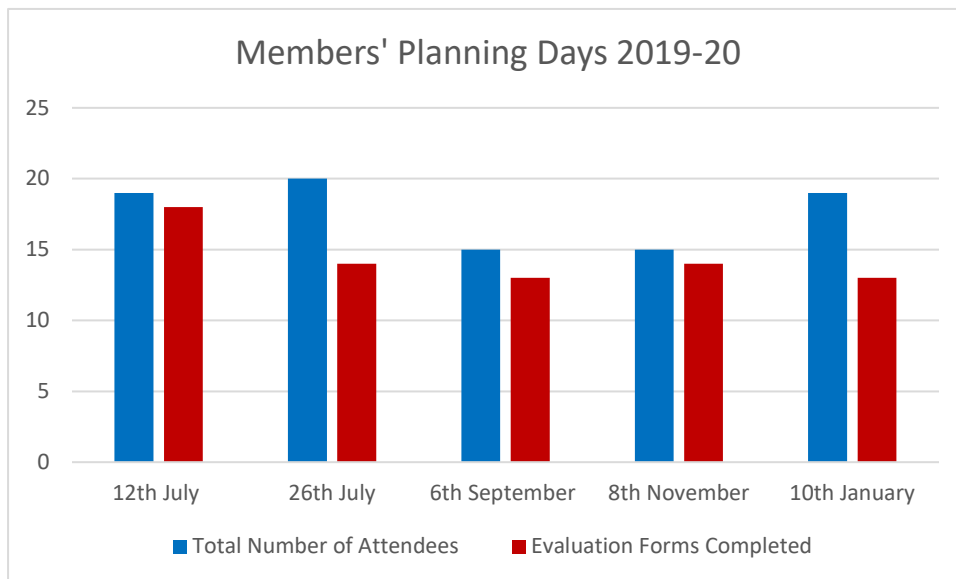
Objective 3 – Provision of an annual Member Training and Development Programme that is in line with priorities identified and within available resources

The Member Training and Development Programme 2019-20 (the Programme) was approved by the Authority in June 2019. It covered general training and development sessions for all Members, as well as induction sessions specifically tailored for new Members. A copy of the Programme is attached as Appendix 2 to this review.

Several Members' Planning Days took place during 2019-20 which provided an opportunity for Members to further their knowledge and understanding of the

Service. The Planning Days aimed to provide Members with key information to enable them to make informed decisions about the Authority/Service's future. They also provided an opportunity for updates to be given on local and national issues within the sector.

All Members, together with the independent (non-elected) members, were encouraged to attend the Planning Days and to provide feedback on the sessions to ensure that they remain informative and relevant. An overview of attendance and completion of evaluation forms, together with a summary of the feedback received from the Planning Days, is shown in the tables below:



Overall, feedback continues to be very positive from the Planning Days with the majority of Members stating that they found the sessions to be 'good' or 'excellent'.

Feedback highlights from the Planning Days included:

12th July 2019:

“As a new Member [the session was a] great way to get up to speed.”

26th July 2019:

“As a new Member, all aspects of the induction process have been excellent.”

“Excellent day. Programme was relevant and informative.”

6th September 2019:

“You learn something every session”

“The Beechmere presentation was also most helpful and informative”

8th November 2019:

Several Members commented on the wildfire presentation by firefighters from Macclesfield and Poynton, describing it as “excellent”.

10th January 2020:

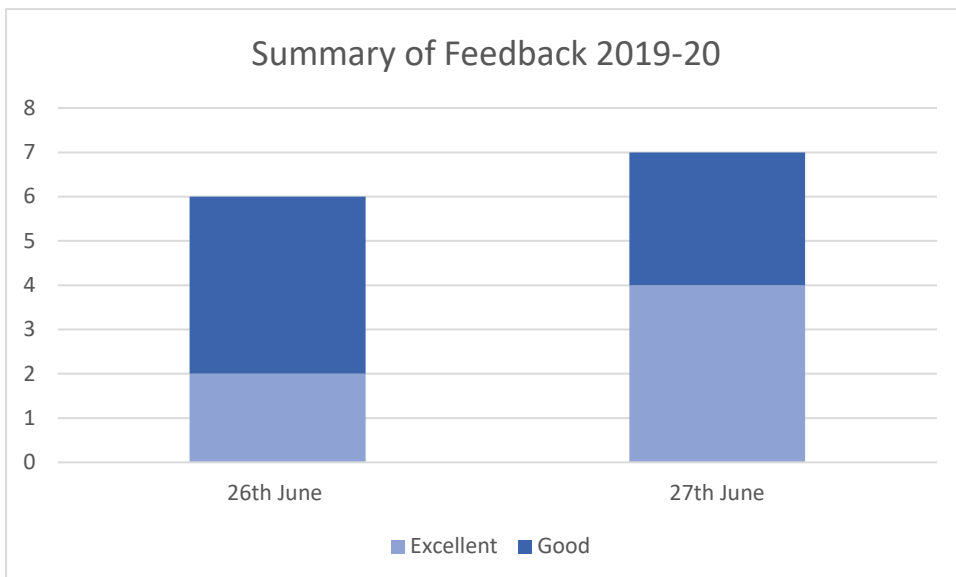
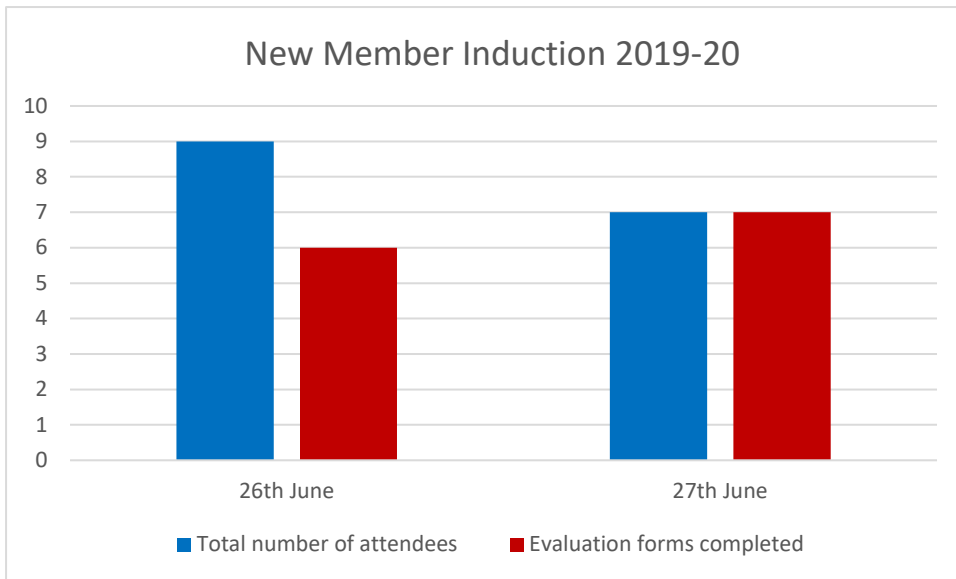
Several Members commented that they found the Beechmere incident presentation extremely helpful.

Note: the Planning Day scheduled to take place on 3rd April 2020 was cancelled due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Objective 4 – Delivery of a comprehensive and effective induction process for new Members

15 new Members joined the Authority during 2019-20. 2 of the new Members were appointed mid-way through the municipal year and have had informal induction sessions with their officer buddies and the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive. They will also be invited to attend the 2020-21 induction session for new Members.

An overview of attendance and completion of evaluation forms, together with a summary of the feedback received from the induction sessions, is shown in the tables below:



Feedback from both sessions was positive. Highlights included:

“Excellent introduction to the role.”

“The session provided excellent background to the Service and a Member’s responsibility.”

“External audit presentation too lengthy.”

Negative comments will be taken into account for future sessions.

Objective 5 – Member Champions – Review current roles and maximise opportunities for Member Champions to access support networks and development opportunities in line with their specific remit

In January 2020, the Member Training and Development Group reviewed a report on the roles and responsibilities of the Authority’s Member Champions. Members

noted the information. Officers confirmed that the information would be circulated to all Members ahead of the June Annual General Meeting to ensure all were aware of the remit of the roles.

Officers identified the need for two further champion roles. The Rural Champion was introduced part way through the year and the Mental Health Champion will be implemented for 2020-21.

Throughout the year officers have also enabled Member Champions to receive invited to attend Local Government Association networking groups, training and conferences where relevant.

Objective 6 - Continuous Development

The Member Training and Development Group has reviewed monitoring reports regarding the implementation of the Member Development Strategy 2019-20 at its meetings throughout 2019-20.

The Member Development Strategy 2020-21 was considered by the Member Training and Development Group prior to its submission to the Authority for approval.

Members' Personal Development Reviews for 2019-20 have framed the Member Training and Development Programme for 2020-21. The next round of reviews will take place between August – September 2020 and will continue to be analysed in order to shape future development needs.

Following Cheshire Fire Authority achieving the Charter for Member Development in June 2019, Democratic Services will continue to work with North West Employers to enhance Member training and development. Democratic Services will work to uphold the training standards as set within the Charter and continue to attend the member development networking groups.

Democratic Service will explore a variety of training sessions and delivery options in order to continue providing vital training for Members whilst social distancing guidelines are in place.