

Member Champions and Reporting

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report examines the current Member Champion reporting regime and advises of a fundamental review of Member Champion roles.

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Recommendations

Members are asked to note;

- a) The current Member Champion reporting regime; and
- b) That a report on Member Champion roles and reporting will be taken to the June meeting of the Fire Authority.

3 Background

In July 2006, following the introduction of Member Champions, the Fire Authority agreed that that a programme be drawn up for the Champions to report to the Authority at six-monthly intervals. This resulted in there being presentations from two Member Champions at each Authority meeting. From that time, however, the business to be considered by Members increased considerably and meetings became longer. The inclusion of two presentations, each of which could last up to half an hour, made them even more protracted. The Fire Authority subsequently agreed, therefore, to increase the reporting interval to twelve months for each Member Champion presentation.

Recently, for a variety of reasons it has been necessary to postpone a number of presentations, resulting in a backlog. Furthermore, some Members wear several Champion 'hats' and the current presentation regime can, therefore, be somewhat onerous.

The issue of Member Champion reporting was discussed at the Fire Authority meeting in February but, as varying views were put forward, a consensus could not be reached. It was, therefore, agreed that officers bring a report to the Audit and Performance Management Committee, setting out a number of reporting options, for consideration by Members.

4 Member Champion Role

Whilst preparing this report the Corporate Services Manager discussed the Member Champion reporting regime with several Member Champions and senior officers. Those discussions were not limited to reporting but widened out to encompass the role of Member Champions.

The Member Champion for Risk Management and Audit, who is also the Member Champion for Equality and Diversity, felt that, for some Members, there might be difficulty in determining what they can actually achieve in their role. For others, such as her, there is engagement in various officer groups, for instance the Risk Management Group, Health and Safety Committee and Equality and Diversity Steering Group, which enables them to make a meaningful contribution in those areas. This includes the fundamental purpose of the Member Champion role of promoting, encouraging, challenging and driving improvement.

Furthermore it was felt that, with the support of officers, some Member Champions would be able to be more outward looking and use their involvement to raise public awareness of significant issues. Their presentations to the Fire Authority could also be used for this purpose, as well as outlining what the Member Champion had achieved in the role. In addition, future major projects might be an area for involvement of a Member Champion, perhaps for a limited period until the project had been completed.

5 The Way Forward

In light of the above it would seem that, rather than looking at the reporting regime in isolation, Members and officers need to carry out a more wide-ranging review of Member Champion roles and what can realistically be achieved in those roles. It is intended, therefore, that the review take place during May and a report be taken to the full Fire Authority at its meeting in June.

This approach has been discussed with the Chair and Leaders of the Main Opposition Groups and was also raised at the April meeting of the Fire Authority.

6 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

7 Legal Comment

The Fire Authority is not legally required to have Member Champions and neither is there a legal requirement regarding the reporting arrangements for such Champions, although this is considered to be good practice.

8 Equality Impact Assessment

Officers have considered the Service's Brigade Order on Equality Impact Assessments (Personnel 5 Part 2) and have decided that there are no discriminatory practices or differential impacts upon specific groups arising specifically from this report.

9 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

10 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk), the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Business Continuity Planning		Legal	*
Capacity		Member Involvement	*
Civil Contingencies Act		National Framework	
Comprehensive Area Assessment		Operational Assurance	
Efficiency Savings		Retained	
Environmental		Risk and Insurance	
Financial		Staff	
Fire Control/Fire Link		Strategic Planning	
Information Communications and Technology		West Midlands Regional Management Board	
Freedom of Information / Data Protection / Environmental Information		Equality Impact Assessment	
Integrated Risk Management Planning			