



AGENDA ITEM: 15

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

23rd October 2006

WALES CHARTER FOR MEMBER SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

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

Purpose of Report

1. To seek members' approval of the draft Fire and Rescue Authorities' Charter for Member Support and Development and the associated Authority Member Role Descriptions and Person Specifications.

Background

2. The Wales Charter for Member Support and Development (the Charter) is an award developed by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) in collaboration with the unitary authorities which recognises authorities' achievements in member support and development. The high level objectives of the Charter aim to ensure that authorities are served by effective members working to assure/improve corporate governance, local democracy and local services. The majority of members will already be familiar with the Charter and its objectives within their own councils.



Background *(continued)*

3. To be awarded the Charter, in addition to the provision of development opportunities for members, authorities must also demonstrate their commitment in the areas of member support services, members' facilities and constitutional arrangements.
4. The Charter has three levels of achievement, the Basic level Charter, Advanced level and Excellence level. It has been widely adopted by local authorities, and a number of authorities are currently in the process of preparing their submissions for the basic level Charter. Once the submissions have been received and evaluated by the WLGA they will be assessed by a peer review team who, as part of the assessment process, will visit the authorities to meet members and officers and to gather information.

Information

5. Following the launch of the Charter in September 2005 personnel from fire and rescue authorities in Wales met with a representative of the WLGA with a view to ensuring the avoidance of single purpose authorities, such as fire and rescue authorities, when applying for Charter recognition being required to duplicate services and training already provided to members by their home authorities.
6. As a result a "Wales Charter for Member Support and Development: an Approach for Fire and Rescue Authorities" was developed. The Fire and Rescue Authorities' Charter has been designed as a supplement to the local authorities' Charter and is intended to recognise the specific support given to members in their role on these authorities.



Information *(continued)*

- 7.** In order to achieve the basic level Charter all authorities have to adopt Charter Role Descriptions for various posts held on the Authority. Therefore, at the same time as developing the draft Charter for fire and rescue authorities, officers also drew up draft "Fire and Rescue Authority Member Role Descriptions and Person Specifications". The Fire and Rescue Authority Charter, Role Descriptions and Person Specifications are all adaptations of the corresponding local authority documents.
- 8.** On 8th September 2006 the WLGA wrote to the Chairs and Chief Fire Officers of all Welsh fire and rescue authorities enclosing copies of the above mentioned draft documents and requesting their comments on them. Copies of the letter and draft documents are attached for members' information. Although the letter requests that suggestions for amendments should be made by 30th September 2006, following consultation with the WLGA this date has been extended until the end of October 2006 so that all authorities have ample time to circulate the documents to members.
- 9.** Members who attended the All-Wales Fire and Rescue Authorities Members' Seminar at Llandrindod on 19th September 2006 were given a presentation on the Charter by a representative from the WLGA.
- 10.** In its Risk Reduction Planning Guidance the Welsh Assembly Government explicitly stated that "Fire and Rescue Authorities must not only focus on the community but must also consider their corporate risk". Adopting the principles of the Charter and its associated role descriptions and person specifications would go part of the way to addressing corporate risks because in order to achieve Charter status the Authority would be required to assess and address members' training needs.



Information *(continued)*

Although addressing members' training needs has potential financial implications, for the Basic level Charter it is anticipated that these can be managed within present budgets. The Authority's draft Risk Reduction Plan for 2007/08 has already highlighted the Charter as a possible means by which to address corporate risk.

- 11.** Whilst the three fire and rescue authorities are seeking to agree as far as possible standard role descriptions there will be some scope for local amendments so as to ensure that they meet local requirements of individual authorities.
- 12.** Once the Charter and associated descriptions/specifications have been agreed by all authorities and prior to signing a Statement of Intent to apply for Basic Level Charter, which has to be undertaken at a meeting of the full Authority, officers will carry out a self-assessment exercise against the Charter criteria.

Recommendations

- 13.** That members consider the attached documents;
 - 13.1** approve the draft fire and rescue authorities' Charter for Member Support and Development;
 - 13.2** approve the associated draft Role Descriptions and Person Specifications; and
 - 13.3** resolve to pursue Charter status recognition in due course.