
MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2006/07

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Members are invited to give consideration to the proposals for the Member Training and Development Programme for 2006/07. The report also contains details of Member attendance at training courses in 2005/06.

2 MEMBERS ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING SESSIONS

- 2.1 A summary report of Member attendance at training sessions during the period 8 June 2005 to 29 March 2006 is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Members will recall that this Committee felt it appropriate to indicate that each Councillor be expected to attend at least one planning related session per year (Minute 39/03).
- 2.3 Details of Parish/Town Council attendance are attached at Appendix 2.
- 2.4 In addition to the opportunities provided by this Council's training programme in 2005/06, two Members have attended the following courses run externally by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA):-
- Resource Management and the Efficiency Agenda
 - Programme for Overview & Scrutiny Chairmen
 - Planning as a Strategic Tool.
- 2.5 Two Member Away Days on the budget were organised and some Members have responded to a selection of courses offered by Basildon and Castle Point Councils.

3 MEMBER TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONNAIRE – REVIEW OF 2005/06

- 3.1 Based on the 16 responses received to the recent questionnaire circulated to all Members of the Council, which included a review of the training programme for 2005/06, the following key points have been made:-
- Whilst the majority of respondents found the Training and Development sessions useful, some Members indicated that the sessions provided by the IDeA consultant and Member Peer could have been improved in terms of course content, course presenters and the style of course.

- It was indicated that because of the difficulties last year using the Carriage Room at the Freight House in the hot weather, the Pullman Suite at the Freight House should be identified for use during the summer months. However, the majority of respondents favoured holding all Member training at the Civic Suite.
- For those Members who had not been able to attend training sessions, work/family commitments and having already attended similar courses were the most quoted reasons.

4 MEMBER TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONNAIRE – REQUESTS FOR FORTHCOMING YEAR

4.1 The questionnaire posed questions relating to the forthcoming year's training.

- The majority of respondents indicated their preference for training to be interactive, involving for example workshops, role-playing and case studies.
- The majority of respondents continued to prefer the arrangement of holding courses in the afternoon and repeated in the evening.
- A number of possible subject areas were highlighted in the questionnaire and based on the responses received, the following development requests have been identified:-
 - RDC Partnership Development (10)
 - Chairmanship/Questioning Skills (9)
 - Children's Services (9)
 - Performance Management (8)
 - Gambling Act (7)
 - Press/PR/Media Skills (7)
 - Risk Management (7)
 - Scrutiny training (for Review Committee Members) (7)
 - Development Control (7)
 - Dealing with difficult people and situations (6)
 - Procurement (6)
 - Transportation/Concessionary Fares (6)
 - Corporate Plan and Objectives (5)
 - IT Skills (5)
 - Speed Reading (5)
 - Code of Conduct (4)
 - County Highways (4)
 - Audit Requirements (4)

5 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2006/07

5.1 In 2005/06 the training programme was devised to be responsive to the CPA Improvement Plan, to take account of the corporate priorities of the Council, and to reflect the IDeA Member Skills Framework.

5.2 To achieve this, the programme was organised in 3 strands:-

- role development – covering areas such as leadership and decision-making and delivered by the IDeA consultant and Member Peer
- technical skills – covering how the Council works corporately and in specific service areas
- personal skills – such as IT and media skills.

5.3 The programme in 2006/07 needs to continue to be responsive to the CPA Improvement Plan that identifies priority areas for training as overview and scrutiny, leadership, decision-making and chairmanship skills. The programme will also continue to be organised in the 3 strands identified above. However, taking account of the views of Members, it is not intended to use a Member Peer in the delivery of the training in 2006/07.

5.4 Provision has been made in the proposed meetings timetable for the new municipal year for training sessions to be held in three sessions - Induction/Refresher followed by further Competency training in May/June/July, with Competency training in October/November and February/March with 19 sessions identified in total.

Joint Member/officer training

5.5 There may be circumstances where it is advantageous to both officers and Members to be trained together in joint sessions. These can lead to:-

- better use of resources where the requirements of both groups coincide, such as skills training, understanding new legislation;
- a spin off benefit to participants in understanding the constraints and requirements of Members and officers;
- in the operation of the scrutiny function, for example, better working practices and relationships between officers and Members can be achieved.

Detailed Proposals

Role Development

5.6 It is proposed that this strand will cover:-

- chairmanship skills - induction/refresher programme
- questioning skills – competency

- 'champion' skills – as advocate for the Authority or for a specific issue - competency
- overview & scrutiny (for Members of the new Review Committee); it is suggested that these specific needs will be identified with the Review Committee Members once appointed at the Annual Council meeting in May 2006.
- performance management arrangements - competency

Technical Skills

5.7 It is proposed that the content of this strand will cover:-

- What the Council Does/Corporate Priorities/Budget – induction/ refresher
- Code of Conduct – induction/refresher
- Planning/Development Control – induction/refresher
- Council Services – environmental health/waste/leisure/housing – induction/refresher
- RDC Partnership Working – competency
- Gambling Act – competency
- Licensing Act (review of guidance) – competency – for Licensing Committee Members
- Homelessness Review – competency – for Appeals Committee Members only
- Transportation/Concessionary Fares – competency
- Risk Management arrangements – competency
- Audit requirements – competency – for Audit Committee Members.

Personal Skills

5.8 It is proposed that the content of this strand covers:-

- IT skills development - competency
- Press/PR/media skills - competency

IT Skills Training

- 5.9 After a slow start, IT Skills training sessions were offered during January, February and March 2006. Those who attended have indicated great satisfaction and it is intended to liaise with the Castle Point & Rochford Adult Community College and arrange some follow on courses during the forthcoming year.
- 5.10 Regarding Procurement training, at the meeting of the Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 16 February 2006, it was thought that extending an invitation to Members to attend the Council offices to see the

Marketplace e-procurement system in operation would be more beneficial than a formal training session.

6 SHARED WORKING WITH BASILDON AND CASTLE POINT COUNCILS

6.1 As a result of the Leaders and Chief Executives of Basildon, Castle Point and Rochford Councils meeting together to discuss areas of potential joint working, it was identified that Member training was one such area, particularly where external expertise was being brought in to deliver training sessions.

6.2 A number of joint officer level meetings have now been held between the three authorities. During 2005/06, each authority has offered relevant Member training sessions to each of the other two Councils. This has widened the choice of courses, locations and timing of sessions for all Members, and provides the benefit of working with and learning from Members in other authorities.

6.3 To develop this approach to shared working, it is proposed that the 3 authorities jointly commission and provide 4 'best practice' introductory sessions for Members. These would cover the themes from the IDeA skills framework of :-

- community leadership
- regulating and monitoring
- scrutiny and challenge
- working in partnership.

Each of these 4 sessions would be provided in the afternoon and evening at venues in two of the three authorities; so for each event there would be a choice of four training opportunities. It is intended that two of the topics will be delivered in June and July and two in September 2006.

It would then be for this Authority to develop its own training programme to focus on specific local requirements. As in 2005/06, appropriate sessions would be offered to Basildon and Castle Point Members on a reciprocal basis.

6.4 This joint approach to Member training and development is innovative and leads the way in this area, and it is therefore hoped that some high quality proposals are received from training organisations who wish to be part of this initiative.

6.5 To launch this proposed Joint Member training and development programme, an evening event is being considered for 20 June at the Towngate Theatre in Basildon. Members and senior officers from all authorities will be invited to attend the launch of this programme.

7 BEST PRACTICE IN MEMBER TRAINING

7.1 Members will be aware from the report to the Standards Committee last April, that there are a number of examples of best practice in member training which are being adopted by some local authorities. These include Member Development Committees, Performance Development Planning, Training and Development Logs, Top Team's Leadership Programmes, Ward Visits.

7.2 Last April Members had also felt it was premature to work towards the East of England Charter for Elected Member Development which has been developed in partnership with the IDeA and is based on the North West Employers' Charter. The Charter has a number of objectives as follows:-

- Being fully committed to developing Elected Members in order to achieve the Council's aims and objectives.
- Adopting a member led strategic approach to Elected Member development.
- Having a member learning and development plan in place that clearly identifies the difference development activities will make.
- Seeing that learning and development is effective in building capacity.
- Addressing wider development matters to promote work-life balance and citizenship.

7.3 If the Council is to adopt the Charter, an action plan then has to be developed for implementation, as set out in Appendix 3.

7.4 There is a cost of £1,500 in undertaking to work towards achieving the Charter. Members may wish to re-consider this option.

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There is budget provision of £15,000 within the Members' Support and Training Budget, in addition to grant funding of £36,000 available via the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Capacity Building Fund.

9 RECOMMENDATION

9.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- (1) To note the summary report of Members' attendance at training sessions during the municipal year 2005/06.
- (2) To consider the responses from the review of the 2005/06 training and development programme.

- (3) To agree the proposals for the Member Training and Development Programme for 2006/07 as set out in paragraphs 5 and 6.
- (4) To consider whether to adopt any of the suggested development options for the forthcoming municipal year set out in paragraph 7.

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Background Papers:-

None

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