

## MANDATORY TRAINING ARRANGEMENTS

### 1 SUMMARY

This report relates to the current mandatory training arrangements in respect of the Development Committee. It includes suggestions for how the process can be developed.

### 2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 At the Standards Committee meeting of 8 June 2010 it was agreed that further consideration be given to certain aspects relating to mandatory training.

### 3 DISCUSSION

#### Content of May Mandatory Planning Training Sessions

- 3.1 The Committee has suggested that the initial session of mandatory planning-related training, held each year prior to the first Development Committee meeting, should be of a fixed format, covering planning policy and planning legislation and, if possible, run by officers.
- 3.2 Generally, it has been the case that this initial session covers the operation of the planning system, with an overview of planning policy and legislation. This is particularly important in respect of those years when there are newly elected Members. This training has in the past been delivered by the District Council's Head of Planning and Transportation and senior planning officers. An exception to this approach was seen in May this year when, out of necessity, an alternative form of planning training was offered to Members and delivered by Essex County Council officers. This was due to the Core Strategy Planning Inquiry, which spanned 11 to 21 May and which involved the time and focus of the Council's senior planning officers.
- 3.3 The adoption of an approach in which the initial session of mandatory planning-related training is of fixed format, covering planning policy and planning legislation and, if possible, run by officers would seem an appropriate approach that could be adopted.

#### Attendance at a Planning Inquiry to fulfil mandatory planning requirement

- 3.4 The Committee has suggested that attendance at a Planning Inquiry, such as the Core Strategy hearing that was held in May this year, could be viewed as satisfying part of the mandatory planning training requirement. The Committee felt that such planning hearings provided Members with an opportunity to see the operation of planning law in practice and, as such, were a valuable learning opportunity.
- 3.5 This arrangement could be adopted by, say, the Head of Planning and Transportation being asked to provide details of any forthcoming planning inquiries that would fulfil the mandatory training requirement.

- 3.6 In view of the nature of Inquiries, it would perhaps not be appropriate to specify more than a recommended minimum time that a Member should spend at a hearing (possibly two hours). This could be evidenced by confirmatory correspondence from the attendee. In any event, it is envisaged that attendance at such hearings should be applicable only for Phase 2 of the planning training; in much the same way as the Member Tour of the District is offered to Members in September each year as an option to fulfil the Phase 2 mandatory planning training requirement.

Monitoring and enforcing a minimum time for attendance at mandatory training sessions

- 3.7 The Committee has suggested that consideration be given as to whether there could be monitoring to ensure that attendees of mandatory training sessions are present at the training for the specified two hours, and any related penalties.
- 3.8 This aspect could also be related to the Licensing and Appeals Committees. It should perhaps be borne in mind that, in terms of learning, the value of remaining for a certain percentage of a course can vary according to the type of course, how it is structured and the availability of suitably comprehensive written handouts. There may also be times when unexpected things happen that prevent attendance at the course in its entirety.
- 3.9 A clear penalty of not fulfilling a specified time requirement could be that the mandatory training requirement is not fulfilled. However, other issues that should be taken into account when considering whether it would be appropriate to introduce a strict time monitoring system are the availability of alternative training opportunities and the resource implications associated with implementation.

#### **4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

The officer resource would need to be utilised for any additional arrangements associated with mandatory training.

#### **5 RECOMMENDATION**

It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- (1) That the initial session of mandatory planning-related training, held each year prior to the first Development Committee meeting, be of a fixed format, covering planning policy and planning legislation and, if possible, run by officers.
- (2) That attendance at a Planning Inquiry, such as the Core Strategy hearing that was held in May this year, be viewed as satisfying part of the mandatory planning training requirement with the recommended time at an Inquiry being two hours, if practicable.

- (3) To consider whether there should be monitoring to ensure that attendees of mandatory training sessions are present at the training for the specified two hours, and any related sanctions.

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**Background Papers:-**

None

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