

MEMBER TRAINING PROGRAMME 2007/08 – MID PROGRAMME REVIEW

1 SUMMARY

1.1 This report contains the mid-programme review of the 2007/08 Member Training Programme.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 At the meeting of the Committee on 12 April 2007 the Training Programme for 2007/08 was agreed based on three strands of work:-

- Core Information
- Key Topics
- Skills Development

2.2 The detailed programme had been devised to continue to be responsive to the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Improvement Plan (which had identified priority areas for training), the corporate priorities of the Council, Members' self-assessment and suggestions from officers.

3 TRAINING PROGRAMME TO DATE

3.1 The following courses have already been held:-

- Core Information
 - Budget Process
 - Corporate Priorities
 - Development Control
 - Ethical Framework/Code of Conduct
 - New Decision-Making Structure
- Key Topics
 - Equalities and Diversity
 - Planning Enforcement
- Skills Development
 - Chairmanship Skills

3.2 The sessions, organised as courses for new Members or 'refresher' courses for more experienced Members, have been provided through a combination of specialist training providers and Council officers.

3.3 The venues have been the Freight House, Rochford the St John's Ambulance HQ, Rochford and the Civic Suite, Rayleigh. Both daytime and evening sessions have been organised to accommodate Members' commitments.

- 3.4 The attendance by Rochford District Council Councillors, including Independent Members of the Standards Committee, at the training courses to date is set out at Appendix 1.

4 FORTHCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

- 4.1 The following courses are scheduled to take place within the second part of the programme (October to November 2007):-

- Core Information
 - Local Housing Allowance and its impact on the Council's customers
 - Strategic Housing
 - Policy Planning/Local Development Framework (LDF)
 - Inspiring Diversity
- Key Topics
 - Visioning
- Skills Development
 - Communication Skills for Meetings

- 4.2 Specific training is being provided to the Members of the Review Committee by RADA, who use a highly practical approach to training, including aspects of role-play and theatre based exercises. This has previously been deemed very effective.

- 4.3 The final part of the programme (February to March 2008) is currently under development and will seek to include: Questioning Skills (follow-up course), ECC Highways Service, Young Persons Agenda/ECC Children's Service, Older Persons Agenda, Partnerships and Local Area Agreements, Media Awareness (advanced), Dealing with Difficult Situations/People. We will also be looking at the specific requirements of the Executive Board, Area Committee Chairmen and Members, Member Champions, as well as continuing to work with the Review Committee Members on their needs. It has also been identified that Members of the Audit Committee would benefit from training, particularly in relation to financial/audit jargon and procedures.

5 WORKING WITH OTHER COUNCILS

- 5.1 Rochford, Castle Point and Basildon Councils continue to offer appropriate courses to the Members of each Authority from their individual training programmes on a reciprocal basis.
- 5.2 Discussions have been held with Basildon and Castle Point about how to take forward a joint training programme and it has been agreed that, starting from January 2008, we will aim to organise three high profile events a year (one in each area) for Members on topics of current interest. We aim to attract high profile speakers to these evening events. The first topic for discussion in January is likely to be global warming/carbon footprint.

6 POTENTIAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Individual Training Plans/Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) Member Training Charter

- 6.1 At the previous meeting of the Committee the feasibility of introducing individual training plans for each Member was discussed, whilst recognising that too 'bespoke' a training system would be complicated to deliver.
- 6.2 The Council has recently received the report of the Peer Review. It suggests "the Council would benefit from targets in Member development for example, adopting the IDeA Charter. It was clear to the peer review team the Council benefits very significantly from some really good Members. However, in order to further build the capacity of the Council and maximise the talent of Members, consideration should be given to increasing the role of Members as advocates of the Council, and the profile of Member development. This is about maximising the potential of Members through investing in their development, for example through:
- The adoption of personal development plans for all Members.
 - Attendance of Executive and other leading Members at external events in order to learn about good practice elsewhere.
 - Ensuring that all Members participate in mandatory training, for example development control.
 - Consideration of securing Charter Status for Member development.
 - Encouraging better attendance on the full range of training sessions run internally.
 - Ensuring a comprehensive approach to Member support and development."
- 6.3 In respect of the IDeA Charter for Member Development, the Committee last considered this on 12 April 2007, but it was felt premature at that time.
- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 If the Council is to adopt the Charter, an action plan for implementation has to be developed, as set out in Appendix 2. Part of the work required will then be to draw up individual training plans for Members.
- 6.6 There is a cost of £2,500 for assessment against the standard of the Charter. In addition, we would need to use external consultancy to take this forward as there is insufficient officer capacity; also it is sometimes felt beneficial that Members' training and development needs and the production of individual personal development plans are best discussed with impartial advisers. The cost of this is likely to be around £10,000 and would have to be a bid for inclusion in the 2008/09 budget.
- 6.7 An alternative approach could be by building on the annual end of programme survey carried in February/March each year, in which we already ask Members to identify any training and development needs for the forthcoming year. This is usually an anonymous survey. We could extend and develop this survey into a self-assessment questionnaire asking Members to identify themselves and their own specific needs. An assessment process could then be carried out of all training requests. An in-house course would be offered if there was sufficient demand. Tailored programmes could be arranged for individual Members, subject to all requests being assessed on the basis of the following criteria: contribution to corporate objectives; contribution to an individual's role on the Council (for example, whether as an Executive Board, Review Committee, Area Committee Member or Member Champion); with a financial ceiling allocated to each Member of £500 per annum, unless there were exceptional circumstances. This would also be dependent on requests not exceeding the overall Member training budget.
- 6.8 Two Members have already asked for tailored support. It is recommended that these requests should not be dealt with in isolation but are considered as part of the assessment process set out in paragraph 6.7, if that is agreed by the Committee.

National Councillor Mentoring Programme

- 6.9 The National Councillor Mentoring Programme is organised by the IDeA. Through the 'Building Capacity East' Programme, we have access to around 12 days of free mentoring support for Members. This programme offers -
- One-to-one mentoring for individual councillors
 - Role mentoring for small groups of councillors with the same/similar roles (e.g. ward councillors, executive members)
 - Group mentoring for party groups

- To train experienced councillors within the council to act as mentors to new councillors.

In all cases the councillors would be paired with an appropriate peer mentor from the IDeA's pool of accredited peers.

- 6.10 It is recommended that we follow this up with the IDeA and seek to identify the most appropriate use of this resource.

www.moderncouncillor.com

- 6.11 The new 'modern councillor' e-learning service has been developed specifically for local government elected members. The service provides short, interactive and engaging e-learning modules on topics such as working with the media, community leadership, and information technology in local government. All courses include examples, case studies and scenarios of relevance for councillors in their role as community leaders.

- 6.12 Access to this e-learning service is free of charge as it has been purchased by Building Capacity East for the use of all councillors in the region until April 2009.

- 6.13 It is recommended that accounts for councillors are set up for this service and its availability publicised.

'Politicians and Personality'

- 6.14 The IDeA has carried out a 'politicians and personality' study, with more than 600 councillors having their personality preferences analysed using a psychometric questionnaire known as the Myers Briggs Type Indicator. The results of the study have shown how politicians with a better understanding of their own and others' personality, could improve their communication with the electorate and their approach to leadership.

- 6.15 It is suggested that this type of approach could be considered when the area of leadership is next contained in the training and development programme.

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The cost of Member training is met from the Council's Member training budget, which is set at £20,000.

8 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- (i) To note the 2007/08 Mid-Programme Review.
- (ii) To endorse the proposals for part 3 of the Member Training and Development Programme as set out in paragraph 4.3.

- (iii) To endorse the proposals for joint work with Basildon and Castle Point Councils as set out in paragraph 5.2.
- (iv) To consider how to take forward work around personal development plans/Member Development Charter as set out in paragraphs 6.1 – 6.8.
- (v) To agree to pursue the opportunities provided by the National Councillor Mentoring Scheme and the Modern Councillor e-learning service as set out in paragraphs 6.9 – 6.13.

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Background Papers:-

None

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