
MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2010/11 – MID-PROGRAMME REVIEW

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report contains the mid-programme review of the 2010/11 Member Learning and Development Programme.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Member training sessions continue to be arranged in three phases – in May to July, October to November and February to March, with 20 sessions identified in total.
- 2.2 The 2010/11 Programme reflects the decision of Council regarding mandatory training and Phase 1 included mandatory courses for Development, Licensing and Appeals Committee Members. The mandatory training requirements in respect of membership of the Development, Licensing and Appeals Committees have been achieved for Phase 1 of the Programme. A planning-related course is being offered in Phase 2 of the Programme, with attendance at this or the Members' Tour of the District on 25 September fulfilling Members' mandatory training requirement for Phase 2.

3 TRAINING PROGRAMME TO DATE

- 3.1 The following courses were held in Phase 1 of the Programme:-

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| * Mandatory training for Members of the Development, Licensing and Appeals Committees | - Development - Licensing - Appeals |
| * Induction/Refresher Courses for all Members | - Ethical Framework/Code of Conduct - Climate Change/Natural Resources - Recycling and Waste Collection System within the District - Local Government Finance - Effective Ward Councillor |
| * Course for Audit Committee Members | - Role of the Audit Committee and the External Auditor |

- 3.2 The sessions have been provided through a combination of specialist training providers, partners and Council officers, although, where appropriate, as a result of feedback from Members, Rochford District Council officers are used.

- 3.3 The training venues used in Phase 1 were the Civic Suite, Rayleigh and the Hawthorn Centre, Rochford. In addition, the King Edmund School, Rochford was used for the mandatory planning training course on 13 May, due to the unavailability of the other venues. However, it has been decided that King Edmund School will not be used in future as a venue for Member training, following feedback from Members that the venue has insufficient parking and a noisy training environment.
- 3.4 The attendance by Rochford District Council Councillors, including Independent and Parish Members of the Standards Committee, at the training courses to date is set out at Appendix 1.

Review Committee

- 3.5 A course was held for Review Committee Members on 1 June 2010 entitled Questioning Skills and Techniques, which was delivered by Tim Young from the Centre of Public Scrutiny. This was well received and Tim Young was invited back to host a further course, entitled Successful Scrutiny: Work Programming and Scrutiny Reviews, which was held on 28 June 2010.

4 FORTHCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

- 4.1 The following courses are scheduled to take place within the second part of the programme in October and November 2010:-
- Planning-related training (attendance at either one will count towards Members' mandatory training requirements for Phase 2):-
 - Mandatory Development Committee (this is in addition to the Tour of the District held on 25 September)
 - Courses for all Members of the Council:-
 - Media Awareness
 - Influencing Decision-Making in your Local Area
 - Treasury Management
 - Leisure Team Briefings
- 4.2 The final part of the programme (February to March 2010) is currently under development, and will seek to cover any remaining priorities identified, as well as individual requests from Members.

5 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT SELF-ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 Each year, at the conclusion of the annual learning and development programme, Members are sent a self-assessment questionnaire seeking feedback on the previous year's training programme and any individual

learning/development requirements for the forthcoming year.

Learning/Development Requests from Individual Members

- 5.2 39 self-assessment questionnaires were circulated in March 2010 and 32 were returned, a response rate of 82%.
- 5.3 A summary of the specific requests from Members contained in the completed questionnaires, with suggested responses, is attached at Appendix 2.

6 FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION FORMS

- 6.1 As part of the evaluation process, a follow-up evaluation was issued to Members following completion of the courses in Part 1 of the 2010/11 training programme. To date a total of 13 forms have been returned.
- 6.2 The comments received in the follow-up evaluation forms have been noted and are summarised below in paragraphs 6.3 to 6.10.
- 6.3 Members felt that mandatory training courses (Planning, Appeals and Licensing) kept Members abreast of new legislation, good practice and guidance from Central Government. Other courses detailed as particularly useful were Audit and the Role of the External Auditor and the Effective Ward Councillor. Courses delivered by Rochford District Council officers were preferred because they allow Members and officers to interact.
- 6.4 Courses highlighted as having met course objectives were Planning, the Effective Ward Councillor and the Role of the Audit Committee and External Auditor. It was added by Members that where course objectives are not met, the course trainer can be questioned.
- 6.5 Members felt that the mandatory Planning and Appeals courses were courses where they were able to put the skills learnt into practice.
- 6.6 When asked where courses could have been improved, it was felt that in light of the current economic climate more finance-related training would be beneficial and that the use of Rochford officers to deliver courses was more effective, due to their local knowledge. In relation to planning courses, a greater emphasis should be placed on the material issues of which Members need to be aware (as opposed to issues to be dealt with under building regulations) and guidance on grounds that may be used to support a motion for refusing consent in appropriate cases.
- 6.7 When asked to comment on the handouts provided, it was requested that the print could be larger and the use of plain English and simple explanations would aid clarity.
- 6.8 It was felt that follow-up sessions would be useful as legislation changes to enable Members to keep abreast of changes in the law.

- 6.9 Members felt that sharing information learned with other District Councillors and Parish/Town Councillors was a useful part of the training experience.
- 6.10 Members generally preferred that the Civic Suite be used where possible and stated that King Edmund School was unsuitable as a venue due to inadequate parking and it being too noisy. One Member felt that buffets were unnecessary and expensive and that tea/coffee and biscuits would be adequate.

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The cost of Member training is met from the Council's Member training budget, which is set at £20,800 for 2010/11.

8 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 It is proposed to continue to offer Parish/Town Councils places on relevant courses.

9 RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES** to note the 2009/10 Mid-Programme Review.

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Background Papers:-

None

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If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 546366.

MEMBER TRAINING PROGRAMME 2010/11 MID PROGRAMME REVIEW

Attendance Figures to Date

| | Date | Title of Course | No. of Attendees |
|---|------------------------------|---|------------------|
| Mandatory Training Sessions | 13 May 2010 (2 sessions) | Development Committee | 33 |
| | 17 May 2010 | Development Committee – Additional Session | 6 |
| | 15 June 2010 | Development Committee – Additional Session | 1 |
| | 27 May 2010 | Licensing Committee | 12 |
| | 22 June 2010 | Licensing Committee – Additional Session | 1 |
| | 14 July 2010 | Appeals Committee | 9 |
| Induction/ Refresher Courses for All Members | 10 June 2010 (2 sessions) | Ethical Framework/Code of Conduct | 15 |
| | 16 June 2010 (2 sessions) | Climate Change/Natural Resources, Recycling and Waste Collection System within the District | 14 |
| | 22 June 2010 (2 sessions) | Local Government Finance | 11 |
| | 1 July 2010 (2 sessions) | Effective Ward Councillor | 9 |
| For Members of the Audit Committee | 25 May 2010 | Role of the Audit Committee | 11 |

Development Requests from Individual Members**(Taken from the self-assessment questionnaires completed by Members in March 2010)**

| Member Requests | Suggested Response |
|---|---|
| Training session on new planning rules and Members Code of Conduct for new rules (2 Members). | The Planning Code of Conduct will be included as part of the mandatory planning training course to be held on 12 October 2010. |
| Request that handouts and other course materials are emailed rather than posted to those Members who would prefer this. | This will be arranged for Members as appropriate. |
| Course on the responsibility of portfolio holders. | This could be considered for future training. |
| Etiquette course on the responsibilities of the Chairman of the Council. | There is a Chairman's Guide that details the role and responsibility of the Chairman. In addition, one-to-one meetings with the Council's Civic Officer are held throughout the year. |
| Training in partnerships, i.e. LSP, Thames Gateway, regional meetings, LGA. Many Members are not fully aware of what these partnerships are for and they could achieve. | This could be considered for future training. |
| How we could assist Essex County Council with Children's Services, particularly safeguarding of children and vulnerable people. | This could be considered for future training. |
| Continued update for Review Committee. | Specialised courses are held each year for Members of the Review Committee. |
| An update of all aspects of Licensing law, liquor, betting and taxi. | Appropriate aspects of Licensing law are covered in the annual mandatory Licensing Committee training. |
| Request for additional planning-related sessions, and not just the mandatory sessions. | This could be considered for future training, subject to officer resource. |

| Member Requests | Suggested Response |
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| | |
| <p>IT training at an intermediate/advanced level.</p> <p>IT – planning portal use.</p> | <p>This could be considered for future training.</p> <p>This could be considered for future training.</p> |
| <p>As a Review Committee Member I would like to receive training in better questioning skills.</p> | <p>A course was held for Review Committee Members on 1 June 2010 entitled Questioning Skills and Techniques, which was delivered by Tim Young from the Centre of Public Scrutiny.</p> |
| <p>A course in reading and understanding budget spreadsheets and final accounts.</p> | <p>This could be considered for future training.</p> |
| <p>Updates to the Licensing and Gambling Acts.</p> | <p>Updates to Licensing/Gambling law is provided in the annual mandatory Licensing Committee training.</p> |