
MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To facilitate the consideration of adjustments to Member training arrangements in the context of observations made by the Review Committee.

2 DISCUSSION

- 2.1 Having considered a report on how subjects for Member training are chosen and content determined, the Review Committee has asked the Standards Committee to consider adjustments to Member training arrangements and to report its conclusions through the Review Committee for onward recommendation to Full Council in order that decisions can be made that will inform the Member training process for the 2018/19 Municipal Year (Minute 201/17).

- 2.2 The Review Committee made a number of observations. These are set out below ((a) to (d)) with some initial commentary in places. The Review Committee noted that there was no standard approach to Member training across local authorities and that Rochford District Council's approach had developed via a combination of decisions by the Standards Committee in its role in determining Member training and requirements associated with achieving the Charter for Elected Member Development.

- (a) When determining Member training the Standards Committee should receive greater input from other Members on what they want to be included in the programme. Improved input from Members into the training programme could be achieved by involvement of Group Leaders.

Comment – The Standards Committee could convene a Working Group composed of, say, the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Standards Committee and all Group Leaders for the purpose of agreeing the content of the training programme for the following Municipal Year. Available information, such as post-course feedback forms and the outcome of the annual self-assessment survey, could be provided to this Group. The Group could meet each autumn (January/February for the first occasion – the 2018/19 Municipal Year). Any additional changes to the general training policy could be recommended by the Group to the Standards Committee.

- (b) That improvements to the quality of training offered to Members could be considered and that low attendance at training sessions may be due to the subject matter not always being relevant to the Member role, which could be improved with increased Member involvement in the choice of topics offered.

Comment – The Group referred to in (a) above could address this observation.

- (c) The Standards Committee should be asked to consider whether the current arrangement relating to mandatory training was working and whether the process could be amended to accommodate the different requirements of newer/experienced Members.

The current mandatory training arrangements are as follows:

Mandatory planning training: Members of the Development Committee, or those Members who wish to substitute at Development Committee meetings, must not miss two consecutive training sessions of mandatory Development training of the three that are offered each year; this requirement is on a rolling basis, from one year to the following year. The topics for the mandatory planning training courses are determined by the Assistant Director, Planning & Regeneration Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holding for Planning and the Chairman of the Development Committee. The content of the initial session of mandatory planning training, held each year prior to the first Development Committee meeting, is of a fixed format covering Planning Policy and planning legislation, and, if possible, run by officers.

Mandatory Licensing Committee training: Licensing Committee Members are required to attend a mandatory training session each year. Failure to complete the course will result in removal from the Licensing Committee and the ability to sit on Licensing hearings. This mandatory training requirement applies for each Municipal Year and starts afresh each Municipal Year. (In the past, the Senior Licensing Officer has offered a 'mop-up' session to those Members unable to attend the scheduled training session.)

Mandatory Appeals Committee training: Members of the Appeals Committee must have received training before sitting on an Appeals hearing. In any event, all Members of the Appeals Committee should receive 'refresher' training every two years. Failure to complete a designated session will result in removal from the Appeals Committee and the ability to sit on Appeals hearings.

There is provision within the mandatory training that, if a Member fails to meet the requirements, an appeal can be made to the Standards Committee for dispensation.

- (d) Members could perhaps be more involved in determining the non-mandatory aspect of the training programme, with officer input as necessary around changes in legislation, practice etc. The use of an online annual assessment form may increase the return rate.

Comment – The Group referred to in (a) above could address this

observation, including the use of an on-line version of the annual self-assessment form.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 As part of a broader role a Democratic Services Officer with some support from an Administrative Assistant undertakes all administrative arrangements in relation to Member training and development. It would be appropriate for any adjustments to arrangements to be cognisant of associated workload.
- 3.2 The Member training budget is set at £6,500. This includes the cost of Member attendance at the LGA conference each year and the cost of individual Member attendance at courses or conferences. Additional to this amount is any income from Parish/Town Councils or neighbouring authorities, at £40 and £45 respectively, from attendance at Rochford Member training courses.

4 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Parish/Town Councils are invited to attend certain courses at a cost of £40 per attendee after the first free place.
- 4.2 Parish/Town Councils are invited to attend training on Ethical Framework/Code of Conduct held at the start of each Municipal Year at no cost.
- 4.3 There has been a planning course organised specifically for Parish/Town Councils each year. Each Parish/Town Council can send one delegate free of charge, thereafter the cost of £40 is chargeable.

5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None.

6 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 It is proposed that Members consider the observations of the Review Committee and **RECOMMENDS** to Full Council via that Committee accordingly.



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Background Papers:-

None.

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