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## MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

### 1 REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE FOR ONWARD RECOMMENDATION TO FULL COUNCIL

- 1.1 At its meeting on 16 November 2017 the Standards Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Democratic Services on adjustments to Member training arrangements in the context of observations made by the Review Committee on Member Learning and Development. An extract of the key elements of the report is appended.
- 1.2 During discussion on the possibility of establishing a Working Group to agree the content of the training programme for the following and each Municipal Year, it was observed that expertise from Members could be fed into Group appointees.
- 1.3 It was noted that the Standards Committee could decide the terms of reference of a Working Group and require it to report back to the Committee on any matters that would require adjustment to general training policies. It was recognised that establishment of a Working Group could bring flexibility to the process. The Working Group would be in a position to respond at a timely point in the year to Member requests and comments in relation to their training.
- 1.4 Due to the timeline for organising Member training for the 2018/19 Municipal Year the Committee agreed that the Working Group would need to meet in January/February 2018. In future years the Group could meet earlier in the year.
- 1.5 The Committee felt that it would be appropriate for the Working Group to be drawn from Members of the Standards Committee with each political group represented and that it would be useful to have an Independent Person's input, in an advisory capacity.
- 1.6 It was observed that both content and format of Member training could be considered by the Working Group, as well as the option of providing different training for newer/experienced Members. The length of training sessions should be determined by the need and nature of the training rather than for a prescribed time and that the Working Group should consider how the differing needs of newer or more experienced Councillors could be accommodated. Induction training for newly elected Members could be included in Working Group considerations. A suggestion that it be a requirement that breaks are built in to each training session could be considered by the Working Group.
- 1.7 It was agreed that officers should undertake a survey of all Members in respect of training requirements/ observations, for submission no later than 1 January 2018, the results of which could be fed into the first meeting of the Working Group. Information from post-course questionnaires held by officers from current and previous years' training courses and input from the

Leadership Team on courses that they feel would benefit Members could also be fed into the Working Group.

- 1.8 The Committee agreed that the Working Group could usefully consider redesigning the current post-course survey form and the possibility of providing an on-line version of the form. Consideration of the way that evaluation forms are submitted would also be valuable.
- 1.9 During discussion of existing arrangements relating to mandatory training it was agreed that training content should take account of the different requirements of newer/more experienced Members.
- 1.10 It was felt that the current requirement that Licensing Committee Members attend a mandatory training session each year to be eligible to be Members of both the Licensing Committee and have the ability to sit on Licensing hearings should be adjusted to take account of the fact that the Licensing Committee meets to deal with policy making and so Members do not need necessarily to be trained on the hearings process. It was recognised that Licensing Hearing Sub-Committee Members are drawn from the Licensing Committee and therefore all Members of the Licensing Committee should endeavour to attend the annual training session where possible. The Committee agreed that the requirement should be amended so that those Members who do not attend mandatory Licensing Committee training should be unable to sit on Licensing Hearings but able to be voting Members of the Licensing Committee.
- 1.11 It was further felt that where there has been little change in Licensing law, Members may need an update rather than a full training session each year. It was suggested that the option of bi-annual training be considered to allow a recap of the Licensing hearings process.
- 1.12 In respect of Mandatory Planning training, the Committee agreed that the Working Group consider the provision of different training for new Members and existing Members. There should also be consideration of the content of the training offered to ensure that it is appropriate to the needs of the Development Committee.
- 1.13 It was agreed that Appeals Committee training should be mandatory only for Members to be able to sit on an Appeals hearing and that members could sit on the Appeals Committee without having attended the training and that from the 2018/19 Municipal Year attendance at Appeals Committee training should be mandatory each Municipal Year.

## 2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RECOMMENDS** to Full Council:
  - (1) That a Working Group of the Standards Committee, comprising the Chairman of the Committee, three other cross Group Members and an Independent Person in an advisory capacity, be convened for the purpose of agreeing the content of the Member training programme for

the 2018/19 Municipal Year and future years, reporting back to the Standards Committee on any matters that would require adjustment to general training policies. Considerations of the Working Group to include:

- (a) The length of training sessions being determined by the need and nature of the training, rather than for a prescribed and how the differing needs of newer or more experienced Councillors can be accommodated.
  - (b) Information from post-course questionnaires from current and previous year training courses and input from the Leadership Team on courses that they feel would benefit Members.
  - (c) Induction training for newly elected Members.
  - (d) The building in of appropriate breaks within each training session.
  - (e) The design of the current post-course survey form and the possibility of providing an on-line version.
  - (f) The way that course evaluation forms are submitted.
- (2) That officers undertake a survey of all Members in respect of their training requirements/observations by no later than 1 January 2018, the results of which can be fed into the first meeting of the Working Group.
- (3) That in relation to mandatory training:
- (a) The requirement to attend mandatory Licensing Committee training each year be mandatory only in respect of enabling Members to sit on Licensing hearings and that Members of the Licensing Committee who do not attend mandatory Licensing Committee training should remain as voting Members of the Licensing Committee.
  - (b) The requirement to attend Appeals Committee training be mandatory for each Municipal Year.
  - (c) The requirement to attend mandatory Appeals Committee training each year be mandatory only in respect of enabling Members to sit on Appeals hearings and that Members of the Appeals Committee who do not attend mandatory Appeals Committee training should remain as voting Members of the Appeals Committee.
  - (d) That the Working Group established under recommendation (1) above include consideration of bi-annual training for Licensing Committee Members to allow revision of matters relating to Licensing Sub-Committee hearings, including Chairmanship.

- (e) That the Working Group established under recommendation (1) above include consideration of the provision of different training for new and existing Members of the Development Committee and the content of the training offered to ensure that it is appropriate to the needs of the Development Committee.

If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.

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## 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.