

Standards Committee – 9 April 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the **Standards Committee** held on **9 April 2015** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr D Merrick
Vice-Chairman: Cllr R R Dray

Cllr Mrs G A Lucas-Gill
Cllr Mrs C M Mason

Cllr M J Steptoe
Cllr Mrs C A Weston

INDEPENDENT PERSONS (INVITEES NON-VOTING)

Mr S Shadbolt

PARISH MEMBERS (CO-OPTED NON-VOTING)

Cllr Mrs D Constable
Cllr Mrs L A Vingoe

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr J C Burton and Mrs L Walker

OFFICERS PRESENT

N Khan	-	Director
A Law	-	Assistant Director, Legal Services
M Power	-	Committee Administrator

69 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2014 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

70 MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT 2015/16

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Democratic Services on the proposals for the Member Learning and Development Programme for 2015/16.

During discussion the following was noted:-

- The Local Government Association would be contacted to ascertain whether their e-learning courses can be offered free of charge to Parish/Town Councils. If so, details can be forwarded to Town/Parish Council Clerks.
- The two Member Budget Away Days to which Members are invited each year (item 2.3) are not part of the Member Learning and Development programme but provide Members with an opportunity to participate in

discussions around the Council's Budget.

- In previous years the District Council's Head of Planning has offered Parish/Town Councils planning training on an ad-hoc basis at a cost of £40 per attendee. This training has been geared specifically to the needs of the Parish/Town Councils. It was felt by some Members of the Committee that charging for the training can be a barrier to attendance, especially for the smaller Parish Councils that have a limited training budget. The matter is raised by Parish/Town Councils regularly at Rochford Hundred Association of Local Council (RHALC) meetings. The importance of Parish Councils having adequate planning training was recognised and it was suggested that offering training free of charge would encourage attendance. Parish/Town Councils can access training via the Essex Association of Local Councils. During debate it was suggested that if training were held in the Council Chamber a much larger number of attendees could be accommodated, which could allow Parish Councillors to attend the District Council planning training sessions, at no additional cost to the District Council. However, it has been usual practice to run the training via small discussion groups; this would not be achievable in the Chamber.

A motion that, to enable Members to make an informed decision on this matter, further information be provided to the Committee at its June meeting, moved by Cllr Mrs C A Weston and seconded by Cllr Mrs C M Mason, was carried. The following information was requested: the number of training courses that have been available to the Parish/Town Councils and the number of attendees (both since the charges were introduced and prior to this, when the courses were free of charge); the budget allocated for training by each Parish/Town Council and how much is spent by them on training each year. RHALC can be asked to comment also.

In response to concern that the Treasury Management course held in October 2014 was offered to neighbouring authorities at no charge, Members were advised that there had been insufficient take-up of places by District Councillors. It was agreed that, in future, cancellation terms be established when engaging an external trainer. In this way, if there is very low take-up of a course, which makes it unviable to run, Members can be contacted to advise that the course will be cancelled if there is insufficient take-up. It was requested that statistics for take-up of Rochford District training courses by other authorities be provided.

Resolved

- (1) That the summary of Members' attendance at training sessions during the Municipal Year 2014/15 as set out in paragraph 2.1 of the report be received.
- (2) That the proposals for the Member Learning and Development Programme for 2015/16 as set out in paragraphs 4.1 – 4.12 in the report

be endorsed.

- (3) That Members are advised of the LGA e-learning courses, as set out in paragraphs 5.1 – 5.4 of the report.
- (4) That the following information be provided to the Committee at its June meeting on Parish/Town Council attendance at District Council run training sessions: the number of training courses that have been available to the Parish/Town Councils and the number of attendees (both since the charges were introduced and prior to this, when the courses were free of charge); the budget allocated for training by each Parish/Town Council and how much is spent by them on training each year.
- (5) That cancellation terms be established when engaging an external trainer so that a course can be cancelled if there is insufficient take-up, which would make it unviable to run

The meeting closed at 8.14 pm.

Chairman

Date

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