

MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT 2009/10

A copy of the report on Member Learning and Development being issued to the Standards Committee for its meeting on 2 April 2009 is appended for Members of the Sub-Committee.

The Sub-Committee is invited to consider and offer its views on report content, in particular the programme proposed for 2009/10.

Please note: Appendices 1 and 2 referred to in the report will be provided to the Sub-Committee at the meeting, when all the statistics for the complete period will be available.

Sarah Fowler

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Background Papers:-

None

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MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT 2009/10

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Members are invited to give consideration to the proposals for the Member Training and Development Programme for 2009/10. Statistics relating to Member attendance at training sessions in 2008/09 are to follow.

2 MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING SESSIONS 2008/09

- 2.1 A summary report of Member attendance at training sessions during the period 20 May 2008 to 24 March 2009 is to follow as Appendix 1.
- 2.2 The Council, on 27 June 2006, agreed to implement a mandatory training requirement that Members of the Development Control Committee (i.e. all Councillors) attend at least two planning training sessions totalling 4 hours a year (or make alternative training arrangements with officers if unable to attend scheduled sessions).
- 2.3 Details of Parish/Town Councils attendance are to follow as Appendix 2.
- 2.4 In addition to the opportunities provided by this Council's training programme, Members were also able to take advantage of two Member Away Days on the budget and there was a specific programme of training for the Review Committee. We were also able to take advantage of funding provided by Improvement East to arrange for peer mentoring of the Leader, Deputy Leader and two Executive Members. Members of the Standards Committee also attended the Annual Standards Assembly.

3 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT SELF-ASSESSMENT – MARCH 2009

- 3.1 The Standards Committee on 2 October 2008 agreed that a commitment be made towards achieving the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) Charter for Elected Member Development. It was further agreed that a Sub-Committee be established to oversee and lead on the process of applying for Charter accreditation.
- 3.2 As a matter of routine, at the conclusion of the annual training programme, we sent to all Members a self-assessment questionnaire seeking feedback on the 2008/09 training programme and details of any individual training/development requirements in 2009/10. This is also a key requirement of the Charter accreditation process, and requires a minimum 75% response.
- 3.3 39 self-assessment questionnaires were circulated and 33 returned, a response rate of 85%. A summary of responses is set out in Appendix 3.
- 3.4 Key findings are:-
- 28 respondents found the training sessions useful or very useful.

- 2 respondents thought the sessions could be improved, the reasons identified being course content and course presenters.
- For those Members not able to attend one or more training and development sessions, work/family commitments was the most quoted reason.
- There is a clear preference for holding training courses equally between venues in Rayleigh and Rochford.
- There is a clear preference for arranging training courses in the afternoon and repeating them in the evening.

4 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2009/10

- 4.1 The Council's 'Key Policies and Actions 2009/10' report identifies the Member Training and Development Programme and the work towards obtaining Charter accreditation as two of the key projects for the year.
- 4.2 The Programme needs to be responsive to the corporate priorities of the Council, as well as the individual training needs of Members. The Programme also needs to ensure that the Council continues to meet its obligations under equalities legislation.
- 4.3 Provision has been made in the Council's draft meetings timetable for the new municipal year for training sessions to continue to be arranged in three segments – mandatory and competency training in May/June/July, with further competency training in October/November and February/March, with 20 sessions identified in total.
- 4.4 There will be circumstances where it is advantageous to both officers and Members to be trained together in joint sessions. These can lead to:-
- better use of resources where the requirements of both groups coincide, such as skills training and understanding new legislation;
 - a spin off benefit to participants in understanding the constraints and requirements of Members and officers;
 - in the operation of the scrutiny function, for example, better working practices and relationships between officers and Members can be achieved.

Mandatory Training – Development Control and Licensing

- 4.5 The Programme also needs to reflect the decision of Council regarding mandatory training for Development Control and Licensing Committee Members.
- 4.6 At its meeting on 28 October 2008, Council agreed:-

- That attendance at two planning training sessions totalling 4 hours a year, or the making of alternative training arrangements with officers if unable to attend scheduled sessions, be a mandatory requirement of membership of the Development Control Committee in the next municipal year.
- That it be mandatory that Members of the Licensing Committee receive appropriate licensing training prior to participating in Licensing hearings in the next municipal year.

4.7 At the Council meeting on 18 December 2008 it was agreed that:-

- In the annual Member training and development programme an initial mandatory session on development control (2 hours) will be held after the Annual Council meeting, by the end of May and prior to any meeting of the Development Control Committee in that municipal year. The final required two hours of planning training will need to be achieved by the end of December in any year, and there will be at least two relevant sessions (including the Tour of the District) in the Member training and development programme to facilitate this.
- Failure to complete the first mandatory development control course by the end of May will result in removal from the Development Control Committee with effect from June, on the basis that the Member concerned will be able to visit and speak (but not vote) at meetings.
- Similarly, failure to complete the second two hours of planning training by the end of December will result in removal from the Development Control Committee with effect from January, on the basis that the Member concerned will be able to visit and speak (but not vote) at meetings.
- The Member training and development programme to include a mandatory course for all Members of the Licensing Committee before the end of May each year and that failure to complete the course will result in removal from the Licensing Committee and the ability to sit on Licensing hearings.
- If any Member fails to meet these mandatory requirements but has good reason (such as illness) an application can be made to the Standards Committee for dispensation.

Mandatory/Competency Training – May to July 2009

4.8 Based on the above, the following Programme is proposed for the eight training slots identified from May to July 2009:-

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| May | - Development Control – mandatory |
| | - Licensing – mandatory |
| June/July | - Key Priorities for the Year (including equalities) |
| | - Comprehensive Area Assessment |
| | - County Highways |
| | - Emergency Planning/Pitt Review |
| | - Media Awareness |
| | - Chairmanship |
| | - Evening Audit training (for Audit Committee Members) |

Review Committee

- 4.9 The Review Committee will need its own specific programme and it is proposed to develop this in conjunction with the Chairman of the Review Committee. Topics are likely to include:-
- an initial introduction to any newly appointed Members of the Review Committee;
 - questioning skills;
 - communication skills for scrutiny.
- 4.10 In light of the comments received from Members, we will take action to be more specific about who courses are most suitable for, whether Executive, Review, Probity or Area Committee Members, and whether the course content is new or a 'refresher' of previous information.
- 4.11 It is suggested that the programme for the remaining training sessions in October/November and February/March be developed in consultation with the Charter Sub-Committee.
- 4.12 It is intended that some work will also be undertaken to work on the specific training requirements of individual Members in the context of working towards the Charter.
- 4.13 It is intended that the majority of the training programme will be delivered by officers, supplemented by external trainers where appropriate. The Improvement East Regional Partnership is offering all authorities access to training and development opportunities free of charge, and it is proposed to utilise this offer to provide up to three sessions for Members later in the training Programme.
- 4.14 It is proposed to pilot the use of different types of learning material. Calderdale Council has won awards for its Member development activities. These include production of a DVD on chairing meetings and also a 3-DVD set with booklets on getting the most out of scrutiny. These are being

obtained and will be trialled with Committee Chairmen and the Review Committee as appropriate.

- 4.15 We have also established online accounts for Members to access the new 'modern councillor' e-learning service, which provides short, interactive e-learning modules on topics such as working with the media and community leadership.
- 4.16 In accordance with the results of the Member survey it is proposed that we continue to arrange courses in the afternoon and then repeat them in the evening. However, there may be occasions when these timings need to be reviewed in order to accommodate training that may need a longer session. Additionally, the costs of using an external trainer can be high if the actual attendance is quite low.
- 4.17 It is also proposed to continue to arrange training equally between the Civic Suite, Rayleigh and appropriate venues in the Rochford area of the District. We will aim for each course to last a maximum of two hours, plus a 15 minute refreshment break part way through.
- 4.18 The Charter Sub-Committee is meeting on 26 March 2009 to discuss this report and its comments will be reported to the Standards Committee.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The cost of Member training is met from the Member training budget, which is set at £20,000 for 2009/10.

6 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

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

7 RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**
 - (1) To consider the summary of Members' attendance at training sessions during the municipal year 2008/09 as set out in paragraph 2.1 to 2.4.
 - (2) To agree the proposals for the Member Training & Development Programme for 2009/10 as set out in paragraph 4.1 to 4.18.

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Background Papers:-

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