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## **MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2008/09 – MID PROGRAMME REVIEW/CHARTER/ DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report contains the mid-programme review of the 2008/09 Member Training Programme. It also includes recommendations relating to the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) Charter for Member Development, and planning training sessions.

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Committee on 12 March 2008, it was agreed that the Training and Development Programme for 2008/09 be organised into separate themes:-

- Induction for New Members/Refreshers for all Members
- A Programme for the Review Committee
- Training aimed at Area Committee Members
- Opportunities for Members of Probity/Regulatory Committees
- Training suitable for all Members, including the Executive

- 2.2 The detailed programme had been devised to continue to be responsive to the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Improvement Plan (which had identified priority areas for training), the corporate priorities of the Council, Members' self-assessment and suggestions from officers. The Council's 'Key Policies and Actions 2008/09' report identifies the Member Training and Development Programme as one of the key projects for the year.

### **3 TRAINING PROGRAMME TO DATE**

- 3.1 The following courses have already been held:-

- Induction Sessions for New Members/ Refreshers for all Members
  - Ethical Framework/Code of Conduct
  - Corporate Priorities
  - Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)
  - Development Control

- For Area Committee Members
    - Chairmanship of Public Meetings
    - Tools and Powers for tackling Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), including the role of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)
  - For Regulatory/Probity Committee Members
    - Licensing Act 2003 and the role of the Member
    - The New Political Structure
- 3.2 The sessions have been provided through a combination of specialist training providers and Council officers.
- 3.3 The venues used have been the St John Ambulance HQ, Rochford and the Civic Suite, Rayleigh. Both daytime and evening sessions have been organised to accommodate Members' commitments.
- 3.4 The attendance by Rochford District Council Councillors, including Independent Members of the Standards Committee, at the training courses to date is set out at Appendix 1.

#### **4 FORTHCOMING OPPORTUNITIES**

- 4.1 The following courses are scheduled to take place within the second part of the programme (October to November 2008):-
- Courses for all Members
    - Partnerships/Local Area Agreements (LAA's)
    - Media Awareness
    - Budget Process
    - Emergency Planning
    - Members' Tour of the District (planning sites)
  - Courses for Area Committee Members
    - County Highways
    - Public Speaking
- 4.2 Specific training is being provided to the Members of the Review Committee by the Institute of Local Government Studies (INLOGOV). This will take the form of three sessions covering Performance Management, Weighing of Evidence and Scrutinising Finance spread over the next five months. Members of the Audit Committee will be invited to attend the Review Committee's Scrutinising Finance course scheduled for January 2009.

- 4.3 The final part of the programme (February to March 2009) is currently under development and will seek to include: Affordable Housing and Planning, Dealing with difficult situations, Local Development Framework (LDF), Questioning Skills, Risk Management and Community Leadership.

## **5 THE EAST OF ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY (EERA) CHARTER FOR ELECTED MEMBER DEVELOPMENT**

- 5.1 The Charter for elected Member Development is the standard through which a Council can demonstrate that it has achieved excellence in Member Development. The Charter (developed by EERA in partnership with the Improvement and Development Agency) is awarded for a three year period and is mapped against the Investor in People standard.

- 5.2 In previous discussions on Training and Development the Standards Committee has agreed to retain the option of moving towards Charter adoption. Officers have recently attended a presentation on achieving Charter status from which it was clear that the Council already sets a high standard for Member Development and Training and could actively consider working towards accreditation.

- 5.3 The normal cost of applying for accreditation is £3,000. However, a grant of £1,500 would be available from EERA to the Council this financial year meaning that the cost would be £1,500. This accreditation process can take up to three years. On deciding to commit, an opening workshop on the accreditation process is arranged with the Council. In the initial stages the Council would undertake a process of self-assessment against Charter criteria and draw up an action plan with a view to meeting application requirements. Once awarded, the Charter has a life span of three years after which the Council would be required to submit details of how it has sustained the standard. Contact has been made with neighbouring authorities to see if they have been considering moving towards the Charter given that there might be some opportunity for joint working/sharing.

- 5.4 Whilst there is flexibility within the criteria set for Charter status, four areas are key:-

- Top political and managerial leadership commitment to the development of elected Members.
- The production of a policy statement.
- A process for identifying needs at an individual and Council wide level.
- That investment in learning and development is evaluated in terms of benefits and impact.

- 5.5 EERA places particular emphasis on the need for commitment and lead from elected Members to their own development. In view of this, it is suggested

that the Standards Committee could consider establishing a Sub-Committee of Members to oversee and lead on the application process. The Committee may feel it appropriate to appoint the Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee as Sub-Committee Chairman and to extend invitations to Group Leaders, two other elected Members who would be interested in promoting and working towards Charter status and one, or perhaps two, Independent Members.

## **6 DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE**

- 6.1 The importance that should be placed on Members appointed to quasi judicial bodies/bodies where decisions have to take account of legislative and regulatory control has been a feature of discussions with Audit Commission inspectors during the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process.
- 6.2 The Audit Commission inspectors were advised that in 2006 the Council set up a Sub-Committee to review the operation/process of the then Planning Services Committee (now Development Control Committee). The review resulted in a recommendation that all Members of the Development Control Committee should attend two mandatory planning training sessions totalling 4 hours in each municipal year, or make alternative training arrangements with officers if unable to attend scheduled sessions, otherwise sanctions might be considered. In considering the recommendation at that time Council agreed that the term 'mandatory' and reference to sanctions should be removed.
- 6.3 Last year the Standards Committee raised concern that a high number of Members were not complying with the set requirement that all Members should attend two planning training sessions totalling 4 hours in each year, following which the Monitoring Officer wrote to non-attending Members drawing their attention to the need for attendance and recommending that they make every effort to meet this requirement.
- 6.4 In view of the above, it is suggested that the Standards Committee may feel it appropriate to recommend to Full Council that attendance at two planning-related training sessions totalling 4 hours is mandatory for the retention of membership of the Development Control Committee.
- 6.5 The situation with regard to other bodies such as the Licensing Committee could be considered at a later point, if appropriate.

## **7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The cost of Member training is met from the Council's Member training budget, which is set at £20,000. The cost of an application for Charter status would be £1,500.

**8 RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- (1) To note the 2008/09 Mid-Programme Review.
- (2) To commit towards achieving the Charter for elected Member Development.
- (3) To establish a Sub-Committee for the purpose of overseeing and leading on the process of applying for accreditation to comprise:-
  - The Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee (Chairman of Sub-Committee).
  - The Leader of the Conservative Group.
  - The Leader of the Liberal Democrat group.
  - Two other interested elected Members.
  - One, or perhaps two, Independent Members of the Standards Committee.
- (4) To consider whether to recommend to Full Council that attendance at two planning training sessions totalling 4 hours each, 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.

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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.

## Appendix 1

## MEMBER TRAINING PROGRAMME 2008/09 MID PROGRAMME REVIEW

### Attendance Figures to Date

	Date	Title of Course	No of Members Attended
<b>Induction Sessions for New Members/ Refreshers for all Members</b>	20 May 2008 (2 sessions)	Ethical Framework/Code of Conduct	17
	21 May 2008 (2 sessions)	Corporate Priorities (to include Equalities and Diversity)	14
	28 May 2008 (2 sessions)	Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)	16
	29 May 2008 (2 sessions)	Development Control	31
<b>For Area Committee Members</b>	3 June 2008 (2 sessions)	Chairmanship of Public Meetings	14
	1 July 2008 (2 sessions)	Tools and Powers for tackling Anti-Social Behaviour of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)	16
<b>For Regulatory/ Probity Committee Members</b>	18 June 2008 (2 sessions)	Licensing Act 2003 and the role of the Member	13
	15 July 2008 (2 sessions)	The New Political Structure	19