
MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report looks into various aspects of the Member training programme as raised by the Standards Committee at its meeting on 14 April 2016.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 At its meeting on 14 April, the Committee requested that the following information relating to Member Learning and Development be provided to the first meeting of the Standards Committee in the new Municipal Year.

The viability of reducing the number of mandatory planning training sessions offered each year from four to three per annum and how this would work in practice.

- 2.2 Council on 23 October 2012 resolved that four sessions of mandatory planning training be timetabled to take place during the year; the training to be based on a rolling program from one year to the next. The consequence of non attendance at two consecutive training sessions is that the Member will not be able to vote at Development Committee meetings until they have attended the next mandatory training session. (This requirement applies equally to those Members who wish to substitute on the Committee.)
- 2.3 Currently the four mandatory planning training sessions timetabled each Municipal Year are held in May, September, November and February. If it were to be decided that this should be reduced to three per year it would make sense for the session in February to be removed, as by this time Members of the Committee will have received a good grounding in planning matters via the training provided.
- 2.4 In terms of how a reduction to three training sessions per annum would work in practice, the following could be considered: that attendance at all three training sessions would be recommended but that a minimum of two training sessions during the Municipal Year would be mandatory; the mandatory training requirement would start afresh each year. There could be a requirement that Members newly elected to the Committee would have to attend the training session scheduled for May. Or that, until a Member has attended a training session in that Municipal Year; they will not be able to vote at Development Committee meetings.
- 2.5 The reduction from four to three training dates per year would have a favourable impact on the officer resource applied to training provision, something the Committee recognised at its last meeting.
- 2.6 It is not anticipated there would be any implications for the proficiency of members of the Development Committee, but there would remain the opportunity to organise 'ad hoc' training events for Members if a specific

training need emerges and Members can contact officers if they need advice on any aspect of the planning process.

Advice from officers on how the content, quality and appropriateness of the mandatory planning training sessions can be ensured.

- 2.7 More detailed discussions on the delivery of planning training would need to be held when the new Assistant Director is in post. In any event, it would be sensible for the contents of each training session to be discussed and agreed in advance with the Portfolio Holder for Planning.

Feedback from Members on the time of day they would prefer training courses to be held.

- 2.8 The Standards Committee on 14 April discussed the viability of offering morning training sessions as an alternative to either the afternoon or evening sessions currently offered. It was felt that training should be organised, where possible, to meet the needs of the majority.
- 2.9 All Members were emailed to ask if they had a preference as to the time of day that training courses be held, i.e. morning, afternoon, evening.
- 2.10 Responses were received from 25 Members.

Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Afternoon and evenings*	Morning and evenings	Morning preferred/ afternoons	Morning and afternoon	All ok
3	2	7	6	2	2	1	2

* Please note that one Councillor who preferred afternoon and evenings, said mornings would be ok.

How e-learning can be incorporated into the Member training programme.

- 2.11 The Local Government Association (LGA) has introduced a suite of e-learning modules for Councillors; there are now six available and officers are working with the LGA to make this facility available to all Members as soon as practicable.
- 2.12 The e-learning should complement the current training provision. Once successfully in place future consideration could be given to in-house e-learning as an alternative to some of the Council's provision.

Reasons for low attendance by Parish/Town Councils at District Council training sessions and consideration as to whether a minimum number of attendees should be established for planning training sessions organised for Parish/Town Councils by the District Council.

- 2.13 Cllr R R Dray, the Council's representative on the Rochford Hundred Association of Local Councils (RHALC) raised the question of low Parish/Town Council attendance at Rochford District Council training at the RHALC meeting on 21 April. Responses received from Council representatives present at the meeting included:
- a) There is an issue with the £40.00 per Member charge. (Note: Council on 28 July 2015 resolved that one delegate from each Parish and Town Council can attend relevant training sessions free of charge, with a charge for further attendees.)
 - b) Lack of information on the content of some courses in advance of the training. (Note: the Parish/Town Councils have the same advance information as District Councillors in relation to sessions.)
 - c) Timing of the courses, i.e. in the afternoon, which is not convenient for Parish/Town Councillors who work. (This related to the planning training session on 9 March offered to Parish Councils, which was daytime, as other training is generally offered in the evening as well as during the day.) From feedback received it would look practicable for any future planning session to be held as an evening session.
- 2.14 A key question for the Standards Committee was whether a minimum number of attendees should be established for planning training sessions organised for the Parish/Town Councils. Of the 14 Parish/Town Councils in the District there were four attendees at the 9 March planning training organised specifically for them. The Committee may wish to specify that this there should be attendance from at least half of the Parish/Town Councils for a session to proceed.

3 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**
- (1) That the current arrangement of four mandatory planning training sessions be reduced to three, to be held in May, September and November each year and that the mandatory training requirement starts afresh each Municipal Year.
 - (2) That detailed discussion on the delivery of mandatory planning training be held when the new Assistant Director is in post. The contents of each training session to be discussed and agreed in advance with the Portfolio Holder for Planning.

- (3) That, on the basis of the outcome of the survey, wherever possible the current arrangement of afternoon and evening sessions for Member training courses be maintained.
- (4) That, in future, bespoke planning training for Parish/Town Councils be held in the evening and only proceed if at least half (seven) of the Councils have an attendee.



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Background Papers:-

None.

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