

## **MEMBER TRAINING PROGRAMME 2004/05**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Members are invited to give consideration to the proposals for the Competency Training Programme.

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 Members of the Standards Committee agreed at their meeting on 30 January 2003 that the training be divided into two types – Induction and Competency as follows:-

- May/June/July under normal circumstances (Induction), however, the programme has been curtailed this year to take account of the elections being held in June.
- October/November (Competency Part 1)
- February/March (Competency Part 2).

- 2.2 Each training session will be held at 1.30 pm and repeated at 7.30 pm, unless otherwise stated. As usual, the venues will be alternated between the Civic Suite, Rayleigh, and the Freight House, Rochford on a two-thirds/one-third basis.

### **3 INDUCTION TRAINING**

- 3.1 This year's induction programme was approved by the Standards Committee at its meeting held on 15 April 2004.

- 3.2 Members recommended that, as there could potentially be fewer new Members this year, the inclusion of Chairmanship Skills in the induction programme might not be appropriate. The majority of Chairmen/Vice Chairmen appointed for this municipal year have either had previous experience of chairmanship or have been on one of the two courses recently offered by the Council and it is, therefore, considered that a further course is not warranted at this stage.

- 3.3 This Committee had also recommended that an early session on Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement (DPE) be held. The Head of Revenue and Housing Management considered that October would be a particularly busy time with the extra work involved with the introduction of DPE, and therefore the training has been included in the Induction programme in place of Chairmanship Skills. This has been graded as Recommended for all Members to attend.

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#### 4 COMPETENCY TRAINING

- 4.1 A suggested programme of competency training is appended for Members' consideration, although actual dates of some are yet to be confirmed. This takes into account the recommendations made by this Committee at its last meeting.
- 4.2 Provisionally, the competency sessions have been categorised as 'Recommended/Optional'. Members need to determine that the category for each session is appropriate. The pre-course paperwork will indicate whether repeated courses will contain upgraded or advanced information.
- 4.3 It has been necessary to book the trainer well in advance for the Licensing training and therefore these dates are fixed. The full day session to be held on Wednesday 20 October will look at the Government's guidance on the new Licensing Act in general and the detail of the Council's Licensing Policy.
- 4.4 A further half-day session has been arranged on Friday 22 October for Members of the Appeals & Licensing Committee, which will enable detailed consideration of how to adjudicate at a licensing appeal hearing.
- 4.5 Members will be aware of the Central Government initiatives, through the Department for Work and Pensions, to improve the Benefit service in all local authorities and to drive down fraud and corruption in the system, which is costing the taxpayer around £7 billion annually. The Head of Revenue and Housing Management recommends that, as Housing Benefit generates the highest level of customer contact for officers and Members alike, this is an important training need.
- 4.6 In respect of the Committee's recommendation that consideration be given to the possibility of combined working with other authorities, contact has been made with two neighbouring authorities and the County Council around the possibility of reciprocal working in order to reduce training costs and maximise benefit to Members. At the time of writing, details of these authorities' Member training proposals are awaited.
- 4.7 The recent 'priority outcomes paper for local e-government' issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister lists 54 e-government targets that all local authorities must meet. One of these targets is to 'establish an e-skills training programme for Council Members with recognised basic level of attainment (eg European Computer Driving Licence, British Computer Society Qualification 'e-citizen')'. This has to be achieved by March 2006. The Standards Committee will need to consider how such a programme can be delivered for Members. Initial contact is being made with the County Council to determine if there is a possibility of joint working in this area.
- 4.8 Members will note that there is a vacant slot in Part 2 of the Competency training programme. It may be appropriate for this to remain clear pending

the recommendations of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Action Plan, at which stage it may be appropriate to consider including a session on Performance Management or a further session on Overview and Scrutiny.

- 4.9 Members will recall that this Committee agreed that Members of the Council should attend at least one planning related session every year and this can be monitored through the attendance figures, which will be reported to the Standards Committee in April 2005.

**5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The costs of the training programme can be met from the Members' Support and Training Budget.

**6 PARISH IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Parish Councillors will be invited to relevant sessions of the Member training programme.

**7 RECOMMENDATION**

- 7.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

To agree the Competency Training Programme 2004/05. (HAMS)

Sarah Fowler

Head of Administrative & Member Services

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**Background Papers:**

None

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