MEMBER TRAINING AND SUPPORT

1   SUMMARY

1.1   This report recommends that the Council becomes a signatory to a training charter for Councillors. It also outlines the arrangements for an intensive period of member training for new and existing councillors immediately following the elections and recommends the provision of self-tuition facilities in the Members' Lounges at Rayleigh and at Rochford. The report also explains how a Council email address and internet access can now be made available to those Members wishing to avail themselves of this facility.

1.2   Member training and support is not a statutory activity.

2   INTRODUCTION

2.1   When Members gave consideration to their future support requirements last year, training was viewed as being of importance for ensuring that all members of the Council gained the necessary skills and knowledge to fulfil their duties. In recognising the benefits to be gained from a comprehensive training programme, the Council has anticipated the latest national thinking on the issue and ensured that the Council is well placed to assist Councillors to meet more effectively the challenges ahead.

2.2   The Council has recently received requests from the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) and the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) that it adopts a Councillor Training Charter. Details of these requests are set out below. Information is also provided on a proposed Councillor training programme for the first few weeks of the next municipal year.

2.3   Although Members will be invited to consider a wider programme of Member support in the next cycle of meetings, the request for improved access to information about the Council is linked to future training requirements and is therefore dealt with below.

3   CHARTER FOR MEMBER TRAINING

3.1   The Council has received requests from the LGIU and the IDeA that it adopt a Councillor Training Charter. Details of the charters proposed by each organisation are attached at Appendix A to this report. The purpose of adopting a charter is to demonstrate the Council's commitment to training its Members. It is recognised that such action will also send an important message to the wider community that the Council believes in training and is of particular relevance to anyone

considering standing as a candidate for election to the Council for the first time.

3.2   Of the two Charters, that from the LGIU most closely reflects the policy and practice of this Authority and Members may therefore find this the most preferable of the two.

3.3   The Sub-Committee is invited to consider whether it wishes to lend its support to one or both of the two training charters and, if so, which one.

4   TRAINING PROGRAMME 2000/01

4.1   One of the major challenges facing new councillors in the first weeks of office is attempting to learn about what the Council does and how it operates. Existing councillors serving on committees for the first time also need a means of quickly getting up to speed with the service issues facing each committee. With these specific training requirements in mind, the Head of Administrative and Member Services has prepared the training programme attached at Appendix B to this report. Members will note that it is suggested that all but one of the proposed sessions take place in the two weeks following the Annual Meeting of the Council and the programme of meetings for 2000/01 (to be considered by Finance and General Purposes Committee) has been prepared with this in mind. The training sessions will be open for any Member of the Council to attend.

4.2   Additionally, it is intended to organise training sessions on chairing meetings and speed reading and details of these will be made available to Members in the near future.

5   INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TRAINING AND TRAINING RESOURCES

5.1   When Member training was considered last year, it was suggested that training might also be made available to Members in the use of common IT software applications such as Word and Excel. Having considered how this might be achieved most cost effectively, it is suggested that

• Training sessions for staff currently held during the working day be opened up for Members to attend. This arrangement could be offered not just for IT training but for other training courses that are provided from time to time. A benefit of making use of the training courses already taking place is that the marginal costs incurred are minimal.

• Learning resources be made available within the Members' lounges at Rayleigh and at Rochford. This would involve the provision of a PC and printer in each lounge together with a selection of self-tuition programmes. A library of other non-IT training materials could also be

made available. The benefit of this approach is that Councillors can make use of the facilities at a time that suits them and work at the speed they wish.

5.2   The Sub-Committee's views are sought.

6   ADDITIONAL BENEFITS FROM PROVIDING A PC IN THE MEMBER LOUNGES

6.1   As well as being available for Member training, the PCs in the Member Rooms could be used by those Members who don't have access to their own PC for producing letters and other documents in connection with their Council duties. Members will recall that this was raised as an issue when consideration was last given to the level of support that should be provided for Councillors. At minimal cost, the PCs could also be linked to the Council's internal network and so offer Councillors access to Committee reports, budgetary information and the planned intranet which will contain information about Council policies and services. The PCs could also offer Members access to email and the internet and be linked to the introduction of email addresses for Members containing the Rochford.gov.uk domain name. The usual safeguards to ensure secure and appropriate use of these facilities would apply.

6.2   For those Members having their own PC at home, it is possible to configure the Council's IT network so that emails received at the Rochford domain address are automatically routed to a Member's own private email account. The principal benefit of this arrangement is that it avoids the need to disclose details of a private email address and so minimises the risk of undesirable use of that address. It is also possible to provide Members with home access to the Council's intranet through a telephone link and this will be provided for in the specification for the development of the intranet. A further report on remote access to the Council's network will be brought forward once the intranet has been developed.

6.3   The Sub-Committee is recommended to allow Members to make greater use of the Council's IT network and facilities as suggested.

7   ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1   Increased use of IT for the provision of information to Members is in accord with the Council's existing policy to reduce the amount of paper used.

8   RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

8.1   There are no resource implications arising from adopting a training charter. The training programme for 2000/01 will be met from within

the training budget for next year. The additional cost of Members joining training sessions offered to staff is limited to the provision of refreshments. The provision of PCs and training materials in the Member' rooms is estimated at £3,000 in the current financial year and £300 per annum thereafter. After allowing for the costs associated with the housing seminar on 30 March, £3,100 remains in the Member training budget in the current financial year which could be used to fund the proposed equipment and materials. The allocation and use of Council domain email accounts would, depending on use, result in a few minutes more of telephone connection time each week to be added to the existing connection time for the Council's email traffic. Any costs arising from home access to the Council's network will be identified in the report to be brought forward on the subject.

9   LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1   The Local Government Act 1972 gives the Council incidental powers to provide its members with appropriate support and training to fulfil their duties.

10   RECOMMENDATION

10.1   It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RECOMMENDS**:

   (1)   (Whether to adopt a training charter for councillors and, if so, whether this should be that as proposed by the LGIU or the IDeA .

   (2)   The provision of self-tuition facilities in the Members' lounges at Rochford and at Rayleigh including the acquisition of two PCs and training materials at a cost of £3,000.

   (3)   That Members of the Council be allowed to make use of the Council's IT facilities, including email addresses and internet access, in support of their duties as councillors. (HAMS)

Andrew Smith

Head of Administrative and Member Services

Background Papers:

As attached

For further information please contact Andrew Smith on (01702) 318135

I&DeA

Improvement and development agency

charter on member development

has indicated its commitment to elected member development as outlined by the IDeA Charter by striving towards

- A member development programme which ensures that members can fulfill their responsibilities to the local community and provide clear leadership and effective scrutiny of local council functions. This may be done in conjunction with the IDeA or other competent agencies

- All members made aware of the training and development opportunities available

- An internal process to identify individual needs, which involves members

- Individual Learning Accounts for Members which provide for a minimum of five days training and development each year to meet the vision of the authority

- Adequate resources to meet the objectives of the training and development from both internal and external resources

- An assessment of how we can assist those with family responsibilities in terms of suitable allowances and support

- A willingness to subject the programme to external scrutiny to check its effectiveness and to share information and good practice with other councils and agencies

- An opportunity each year to examine the way that we conduct our business and the commitments we place on elected members so that those with family and work commitments can come forward to serve their community.

Signed by:

Leader _____   Chief Executive _____

Leaders of other groups _____   _____

_____   _____

Councillor Development Charter

This council recognises the importance of training and development in supporting all councillors in undertaking their roles as community leaders and representatives. This council therefore commits itself to providing a planned approach to member development based on the following principles.

- Leadership and commitment to councillor training and development from councillors from all political parties, which is clearly communicated throughout the council.

- The involvement of councillors at every stage, from planning through to delivery and evaluation.

- Clearly defined corporate responsibilities for officers in relation to councillor training and development, including a named officer with a co-ordinating role.

- An agreed councillor training and development plan with clear objectives, updated each year, which is linked to the aims of the council, the roles and functions of councillors and the key changes affecting the council's priorities.

- Adequate and identified resources to meet the objectives of the training and development plan.

- A recognition of the need to place councillor training and development in the context of other strategies to support councillors as community representatives and leaders.

- A commitment to individual training and development for councillors which values and recognises the skills and experiences they bring with them, identifies their individual needs and offers a diversity of ways of meeting these needs.

- A commitment to evaluating the contribution councillor training and development makes to meeting the council's aims and to supporting and developing the individual councillor, and using evaluation in future planning.

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MEMBER TRAINING 2000

Date	Time	Venue	Seminar/Training Session	Aim	Leader(s)
15 May	4.45pm – 5.45pm (buffet from 6.00pm)	Council Offices, Rochford	Welcome to Rochford – Meeting with the Corporate Management Board and a tour of the Council Offices, South Street	To introduce you to the Council and how it functions.	))))John Honey – Corporate)Director (Law, Planning)and Administration)))Andrew Smith – Head of)Administrative and)Member Services
	6.30pm – 8.00pm	Civic Suite, Rayleigh	Now you are a Councillor – Procedures, Standing Orders and Protocols	To provide you with a working knowledge of procedures that will help ensure a successful first few weeks of office	))))
	8.00pm – 9.30pm		The Modernising Agenda, the Corporate Plan and Best Value – the Rochford response	To introduce you to the major strategic issues facing the Council over the coming year.	Paul Warren – Chief Executive

Date	Time	Venue	Seminar/Training Session	Aim	Leader(s)
18 May	7.00pm – 9.00pm	Civic Suite, Rayleigh	Introduction to Council Finance	To explain where the Council's money comes from, how it's spent and the budgetary process	Dave Deeks – Head of Financial Services Steve Clarkson – Head of Revenues and Housing Management
23 May	7.00pm – 9.00pm	Civic Suite, Rayleigh	Planning in Rochford	To explain the planning process from structure plan to development control	Stephen Heading – Head of Planning Services Shaun Scrutton – Head of Corporate Policy and Initiatives
24 May	7.00pm – 9.00pm	Civic Suite, Rayleigh	Housing in Rochford	To identify the housing needs in Rochford and how the Council responds	Steve Clarkson – Head of Revenues and Housing Management Graham Woolhouse – Head of Housing, Health and Community Care

Date	Time	Venue	Seminar/Training Session	Aim	Leader(s)
25 May	7.00pm – 9.00pm	Civic Suite, Rayleigh	Environmental Health and Leisure in Rochford	To explain how the Council protects and promotes the health of its residents and ensures leisure opportunities for all	Graham Woolhouse – Head of Housing, Health and Community Care Tony Galloway – Head of Leisure and Client Services
30 May	1.30pm – 5.00pm* OR 6.00pm – 9.30pm (buffet available from 5.30pm)	Civic Suite, Rayleigh	Media Skills	How to handle the media, respond to difficult questions and ensure your message gets across including presentation tips for television and radio.	Chris Kelly – former broadcaster and journalist

*Council officers will also attend this session