COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Elected Member Development 2009/10

24th June 2010

Report of Head of Democratic Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Members on the progress made to date with elected Member Development in 2009/10 and request the Committee's suggestions for the 2010/11 programme.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS

(1)   That the Committee note the report and make any suggestions for the future improvement of the Member Development Programme.

1.0   Introduction

2009/10 has seen changes in Member Development with attendance in the latter part of the year reducing significantly.   It has become clear that a 4 year programme of Member Development is required. There is a balance needed between providing training in specific areas for individual or small groups of Councillors and providing new information to long standing Councillors at this point in the 4 year cycle.

Significantly, Council approved the inclusion of Member Briefings in the Council Calendar taking place on the first Thursday of every month excluding August. With these included in the annual calendar it raises the profile of these events and encourages more Councillors to attend.

In the final year of this term, Member Development will reduce as the elections grow closer and the attention will focus on preparations for the 2011/12 Induction.

2.0   Training and Development events 2009/10

Attached at Appendix A is a comprehensive list of all training and development events that took place in 2009/10. It details where the event took place, the cost, who attended and non attendance.

In summary 79 training and development sessions were offered to Members last year. This figure does not include the individual support that has been offered to Councillors such as one to one sessions on IT.

Out of these sessions, the County Council offered five events which proved popular with Members. Unfortunately, four of these sessions were cancelled by the County Council after the May County Elections. Eight other events that were arranged in house were cancelled due to lack of interest.

The list highlights the different development methods that have been used such as taster sessions, one to one sessions, workshops, shadowing opportunities and visiting other authorities. A wide range of sessions took place ranging from Chinese Awareness Session to shadowing at Salt Ayre Sports Centre.

3.0   Evaluations

Members are requested to evaluate each session they attend and feedback from these has been almost all positive with the exception of some minor criticisms. Councillors are also requested to evaluate any conferences they have attended.

4.0   Attendance

Attendance at training or development sessions is widely spread across the political groups but there are 10 Members who have not attended any sessions of any type. This equates to 80% of Councillors who attended some type of development opportunity by the end of the municipal year.

Most in house sessions are attended by an average of 8 people but a problem has arisen with Members booking places then not attending. This has a cost implication in terms of officer time and wastage of food booked for the event. The Committee's views on this issue are requested.

As referred to earlier in the report attendance has dropped off and many events have been cancelled.

5.0   2010/11 Member Development Programme

In previous years at the beginning of the municipal year, we have developed a 12 month programme of development events. This year this has not been undertaken as this is the final year before District Council elections next May and Member Development is winding down. This does not mean however that there will be no development opportunities for Councillors.

We have already the following in place for this year :

- Monthly Member briefings
- Regulatory Committee training
- Community Cohesion/Equality
- Tour of Salt Ayre

There will also be a session on Social Media for Members which will be referred to in a separate report.

6.0   Member Development Priorities

Last year, Council Business Committee agreed the following as priorities in the Member Development Strategy for the year ;

- Local Government Finance
- IT training
- Decision Making Processes (including County Council functions)
- Ward and Community Leadership
- Political Leadership
- Community Engagement and Community Cohesion
- Economic Development
- Service Briefings

Most of these priorities have been undertaken but one that has been an ongoing priority is that of Local Government finance. A large percentage of Members highlighted this as a topic for training in their PDPs but although it is provided every year, the take up is very disappointing.

Again with Ward and Community Leadership/Political Leadership/Community Engagement and Community Cohesion. Councillors are offered places on the Team Lancashire scheme but take up is minimal. Attendance at the Community Cohesion sessions arranged in house still prove to be popular though.

7.0   Progress with project areas

The Council Business Committee when reviewing the Member Development Strategy in June 2009 also identified a number of key project areas:

Use of IT by Members (including paperless meetings and webpages)

All 60 Councillors have now a laptop or use their own computer.

Council Business Committee meetings continue to be paperless but this has not been rolled out to other committees as yet. Some IT sessions with the external provider have taken place over the past year and one to one support is still taken up by several Councillors.

Attendance at IT Workshops has dwindled so these have now ceased and will begin again after the next election if there is a demand.

With regard to Councillor's Web pages, take up of this is still slow.

Ward and Community Leadership

The information and links on the Members page on the intranet has been updated.

With regard to Community Leadership as mentioned above, Team Lancashire has offered places on their Members as Community Champions Programme. There has been very little take up of these session this year though.

In house, we held a Chinese taster session which proved popular.

Members may recall that it was agreed at Council that all Councillors should be encouraged to attend Equalities training. Two Community Cohesions sessions took place last year which were well attended and a further one is set up in July. Officers try to ensure all Councillors attend this important training.

Cabinet Support

Members may recall that a report on Cabinet support was brought to the November meeting of the Committee which set out the views of both current and past Cabinet Members. The main issue that arose from this report was that a further report be brought back to the Committee on 'Shadow Cabinet Members'.

8.0   Personal Development Plans (PDPs)

The one to one Personal Development Plans that have been undertaken from May 2007 onwards have all been reviewed and this information was fed into the Member Training Programme. There are now just 8 Councillors who have not undertaken a PDP.

The PDPs will be reviewed once again this year.

9.0 Budget

The budget is now set at £9,900 for 2010/11 with approximately £1,000 allocated to date.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

The work of Member Development supports Councillors in delivering the corporate Vision and priorities.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT
(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

There are no direct implications.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost of training courses and events set out in this report was funded from the 2009/10 Member training budget.

The budget for 2010/11 is set at £9,900 and the costs of all events for this year will be met from this budget.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Deputy Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS Member Development Strategy	**Contact Officer:** Jenny Kay **Telephone:** 01524 582065 **E-mail:** jkay@lancaster.gov.uk **Ref:**