COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Elected Member Development – One to One Interviews (Personal Development Plans)

29th March, 2007

Report of Head of Democratic Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Members on the feedback from the one to one interview questionnaires and offer suggestions for the way forward.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) **That Members consider all the suggestions and questions on improvement and suggest a way forward for future one to one interviews.**

2) **That it be noted that a future report will be submitted to the Committee on progress with Member Development in due course.**

1.0 Report

As part of the commitment to the support and development of elected Members in their roles and the work towards the North West Charter for elected member development, the Council introduced a process whereby all councillors would be offered the opportunity to discuss their individual development training needs.

Therefore, during 2006, approximately 32 Members have had one to one interviews with the Learning and Development Officer and officers from Democratic Services to discuss their future development and support needs. The aim of the informal interview was to discuss individual training and development priorities for the duration of the year. The outcome of the interviews informed the Training and Development Programme and each of the 32 Members now own a personal development plan setting out their identified learning and development needs. Support was then given to Members to help them meet their needs to assist them in their roles and to review existing plans. The interviews also gave a valuable insight into the requirements of new Members and the need for an induction programme, tailored to meet the needs of newly elected Members.

The outcome of the one to one interviews then informed a comprehensive Elected Member Training and Development Programme which aimed to specifically address Member development and support. The first edition of the Training and Development Programme for May 2006 to May 2007 was published and encompassed generic training for all councillors i.e. chairing skills, questioning techniques, alongside specific training such as speed reading, IT training and leadership training as identified from the one to one interviews.

As a follow up to the initial one to one interviews, each member was asked to review their one to one interview and explain how they feel they have achieved their training needs and whether there have been any failings in the system. Feedback has been received from 18 members which shows that the interviews have been beneficial to members. However it also shows the considerable demands on councillors' time, which means that some of the much-needed training has not been delivered.

A comparison of the training needs identified and the training events which have been organised has been undertaken and it is clear that a third of the training needs identified in the one to one interviews have been offered. For a number of reasons, Members have not always attended these sessions due to conflicts with other meetings and appointments, inconvenient dates/times, or not seen as a priority compared to other Council business. Therefore a number of training sessions as part of the induction have been scheduled for evenings to assist those councillors who work full time and the Council will continue to offer evening sessions where possible. It is important to note that 5 members have not managed to attend or meet any of their training needs identified in their one to one interview; again this could be due to some of the reasons explained above.

It is apparent that there are a number of priority areas where training has not been offered (Chairing skills, presentation skills, public speaking and dealing with the media), and these training sessions will be run as a matter of priority after the election once all training has been undertaken for newly elected members. It is expected that this training will take place from July onwards.

It is recognised that there is not always sufficient interest to run some events and therefore it is suggested that rather than waiting for sufficient numbers, officers look at buying ad hoc places elsewhere i.e. from other training companies or local authorities subject to availability, costs and location.

The target from 2007, as part of the requirements to achieve the Member Development Charter, is for over 50% of all councillors to have undertaken one to one interviews. Clearly there are some issues of ownership by members and taking responsibility for their own development and the Committee is asked to consider possible ways in which this could be addressed:

- Should Group Administrators/Leaders/Council Business Committee Members (as Member Development Champions) lead by example by having their one to one interviews first to encourage their members to do the same?
- Should the information from the one to one interviews be shared with the relevant Group Administrators/Leaders/Council Business Committee Members (as Member Development Champions) so that political groups take on some responsibility to encourage their Members to take up opportunities to attend training?
- Should some sort of 'league table' be devised which can be published on the Intranet showing which Members have taken part in one to ones and in organised training.

Whilst it was encouraging that 32 members took part in the initial one to one interviews, it is disappointing that only 18 provided feedback and review. The process also proved time-consuming for the officers involved and needs to be varied in order to ensure that it can be contained within the existing resources available. The Committee is also requested therefore to consider the process for the one to one interviews and suggest ways in which this could be improved to encourage more Members to take part:-

- Should the interviews be more informal and consist of just one officer with the councillor and prompts for discussion?

- Should the interviews focus more on support and how the Council can assist in ward work and additional responsibilities from becoming a Councillor rather than focusing on training as it is recognised that not every councillor has the time nor the inclination to attend formal training?
- Could the interviews be undertaken on a group discussion basis with just short individual personalised sessions?
- Should the review be held by email or by officers meeting with the councillor again to discuss progress and get constructive feedback.

2.0   Conclusion

Members are requested to consider all the suggestions and questions on improvement and suggest a way forward for future one to one interviews.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK
The work of Member development supports the corporate priority – to continue to improve the Council.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT **(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)** No direct implications

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS
The cost of all learning and development proposals must be met from the member training budget held by Legal and HR. A sum of £10,500 has been included for 2007/08. In view of the additional training required in 2007/08 as a result of the elections, if possible it may be advantageous to carry forward some of the underspend in 2006/07 (currently approximately £7,500) to ensure that sufficient resources are available throughout 2007/08 for member learning and development and a view will be taken on this in due course once the induction training has been finalised and precise costs are identified, and the overall outturn position is known.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS
The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS
None directly arising from this report.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS
The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS	Contact Officer: Suzanne Trippier
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