COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Review of the Member Development Strategy and training priorities for 2007/08

15th November 2007

Report of Councillor Susan Bray

PURPOSE OF REPORT
To enable the Council Business Committee to undertake the annual review of the Member Development Strategy and determine the future priorities for Member development.
This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) **To consider the report and all of the information contained in the appendices and determine the content of the Member Development Strategy for 2007/08 to include the training priorities, targets, project areas and successes and achievements so far.**

(2) **To agree the training priorities for 2007/8 to 2010/2011, to be used to develop a revised Elected Member Training and Development Programme.**

(3) **That the Strategy be reviewed again in April - May 2008 to ensure that it continues to be adequately aligned to the Council's Corporate Priorities and that the annual review takes place at that time of year in the future.**

1.0 Introduction

1.1 As part of the commitment to the support and development of elected Members in their roles, the Council introduced a process whereby all councillors would be offered the opportunity to discuss their individual development training needs.

1.2 Therefore, during 2006, approximately 37 Members had a one to one interview with Democratic Services Officers and the Training & Development Officer to discuss their individual training development priorities for the duration of the year. 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.

1.3 The interviews also gave a valuable insight into the requirements of new Members and allowed for a comprehensive induction programme to be developed, tailored to meet the needs of newly elected Members.

1.4 In addition, a Member Development Strategy was developed and adopted by full Council at its meeting in January 2007 which sets out the various ways of supporting Members in the Town Hall and in their wards. The strategy also sets out the development priorities for Members during 2006/07. It was agreed that the Strategy would be an annual document and would be reviewed each year.

2.0 Review of the Member Development Strategy and training priorities for 2007/08

3.1 The Induction Programme for new and returning Members was delivered from May 2007, ensuring that newly elected members received the basic knowledge necessary and all Members could perform any new duties which they had been allocated effectively.

2.2 Since July 2007, 34 Members have again had a one to one interview with officers of Democratic Services and this information has been collated and provides an overview of the key issues and needs affecting newly elected and returning Members for their period of office. This information will be circulated at the meeting.

2.3 An informal workshop took place on Thursday 1st November 2007 and in small groups, Members considered a number of themes including the support required for Cabinet Members, newly elected Members and Members of Overview and Scrutiny. Feedback from the workshop has been collated and is attached at Appendix A.

2.4 Using this together with feedback from training event evaluations and the Induction evaluations and the Council's Corporate Priorities (all to be provided at the meeting), Members are asked to determine the content of the Member Development Strategy to take account of the information gathered. It is clear that with the election of 16 new Councillors this year, the Strategy is even more important to ensure that the Council provides the proper guidance and relevant support to all Members.

2.5 In summary the key issues and needs include

- Support for newly elected members
- Support for the new Cabinet
- Support for Overview and Scrutiny Members
- Access to development for those Councillors with full time commitments
- Access to ward and Council related information
- Communication skills
- Dealing with the media
- Functions and responsibilities of the district and county council.
- Facility for other types of learning and development resources i.e. shadowing, mentoring, on line e-learning, library of books, publications and cd-roms on a range of topics

2.6 Whilst the Strategy when reviewed will be relevant to the Council's position and priorities in 2007/08, those priorities will be reconsidered as part of the Corporate Plan for 2008/09 and it is suggested therefore that this element of the Strategy be reviewed again in April-May 2008 to ensure that it continues to be adequately aligned to the Council's Corporate Priorities and that the annual review takes place at that time of year in the future.

2.7 It is also suggested that members determine their training priorities for the remainder of 2007/08 and beyond to 2010/11 when the current term of office ends, so that budgets can be set for future years as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy to deliver a programme designed to provide the necessary training and development each year as Members' experience grows.

2.8 One the training priorities have been agreed a revised Elected Member Training and Development Programme can then be prepared to encompass compulsory committee specific training, general specific training for all Councillors i.e. chairing skills, questioning techniques, and generic skills training such as speed reading, IT training and leadership, based on the needs of Members.

2.6 To complement the training programme, Members might also wish to set some targets to improve the work being undertaken, e.g. this could be to increase the percentage of Members having one to one interviews.

2.7 In addition, to address some of the key issues, for example, access to ward and Council related information, Members might wish to establish priority project areas on which to focus resources, e.g. to develop the information provided through the Members Newsletter, to expand the dedicated area on the intranet, to develop Ward profiles, establish regular meetings or walk the ward visits.

2.8 It is clear that the Council has achieved a lot in the last year and it is felt that these successes and achievements should be reported to Members annually in the Strategy.

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)

There are no direct implications.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Member Training budget of £14,500 available for 2007/08 includes an additional £4,000 carried forward for 2006/07 to ensure that sufficient funding was available for new Members training following the district elections. The intention in producing the Strategy and determining priorities is to ensure that the available budget achieves a better focus and value for money.

Once Members have determined their priorities for training a programme will be drawn up in priority order to be delivered within the available budget in each year.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no comments to add.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Legal have been consulted and have no additional comments to make.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no comments to add

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