

**MEMBERS' TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL  
MONDAY, 10TH SEPTEMBER, 2012**

Present:- Councillor Akhtar (in the Chair); Councillors Buckley, Steele and Wootton.

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Falvey, Gosling and Havenhand.

**6. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 21ST JUNE, 2012**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2012, were agreed as a correct record.

With regards to Minute No. 3 (Political Skills Framework) a working group had been set to look at the themes in the Framework and was due to meeting on Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2012. The working group would report back to this Panel in December, 2012 with a view to setting up an initial pilot model.

**7. RECYCLING GROUP REPRESENTATIVE**

Consideration was given to the Members' Training and Development Panel's representative on the Recycling Group and the request for a further nomination.

Resolved:- That the Councillor Steele be nominated to represent this Panel on the Recycling Group.

**8. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES - AUTUMN PROGRAMME 2012**

Consideration was given to the report presented by Caroline Webb, Senior Scrutiny Adviser, which detailed the current and planned programme (2012/13).

Further information was provided on the Elected Member Development Programme which recognised the different roles of Members and the needs with changes at a national, regional, sub regional and local level.

Members have previously agreed that programmes be based on local priorities as identified in the Council's Corporate Plan and individual skills needs identified in the personal development planning process. This programme would incorporate a blended approach to Member Development, using a variety of methods of delivery, including bespoke training, e-learning and use of the Member Seminar Programme. This would suit the needs of different learners, as well as make learning more accessible to Members.

A generic programme was being developed based on issues emerging from personal development planning process and matters arising from the induction programme and included:-

- Media awareness and skills.
- Questioning skills for scrutiny.
- Localism Act 2012.

- Public Sector Equality Duty.
- New Standards Regime.
- Emergency Planning.
- Introduction to Local Government Finance.
- Understanding Council priorities.
- Health and well-being agenda.
- Deprivation: the Rotherham picture.

Dates were being finalised for these sessions and would be circulated shortly. Additional bulletins on courses or training would be circulated to Members as development opportunities arose.

In addition to the above a presentation on the Disadvantaged Areas and Families for Change agendas was presented to the Improving Lives Select Commission who requested that the training and support requirements of Members (both executive and non-executive) relating to these initiatives be referred to the Members' Development and Training Panel for further consideration.

Discussion ensued on the e-learning packages available and it was confirmed that some of the above issues and matters arising from the personal development plan process would be included.

Clarification was also sought on the request from the Improving Lives Select Commission relating to training and support requirements for the Disadvantaged Areas and Families for Change agendas and it was noted that each of the areas had an Executive Member lead and that information was shared with Ward Colleagues. It was suggested that further information be sought on the actual training requirements and the options explored further.

Agreed:- (1) That the report be received and the contents noted.

(2) That a further report be submitted to the Panel on the training and support requirements for Members in relation to the Disadvantaged Areas and Families for Change initiatives once the requirements had been clarified.

## **9. EVALUATION NEW MEMBER INDUCTION 2012**

Consideration was given to a report presented by Caroline Webb, Senior Scrutiny Adviser, which provided details of the evaluation of the induction programme for Members elected in May, 2012.

A comprehensive induction programme for newly Elected Members was delivered following May's local election. The aim of the induction programme was to help new Members familiarise themselves with the Local Authority and their new role.

Following the election there were eleven new Members to the Council. This is the greatest number of new Councillors in recent years. Although this presented a very practical challenge to the organisation and delivery of induction and support, particularly in the context of recent staff changes, the feedback had been overwhelmingly positive.

Officers from each directorate were involved in the planning and delivery of individual sessions. The programme was designed and co-ordinated by the Senior Scrutiny Adviser, with assistance from Member's' Secretariat and was delivered in-house.

In order to improve the process for future years, an evaluation was sent to each of the newly elected members and from the eleven there were eight of the new Members responded (72% response).

The evaluation sought a variety of views and these comments would be used alongside the broad issues raised in personal development interviews, corporate priorities and other policy changes to inform the Member Development programme.

Discussion ensued on the responses received and it was suggested that those Members that had not responded be targeted through the personal development plan process for their views. The feedback received, however, was very useful and would be used to tailor future training to specific needs.

Agreed:- That the report be received and the contents noted.

## **10. PROPOSALS FOR MEDIA SKILLS AND AWARENESS TRAINING**

Consideration was given to a report presented by Caroline Webb, Senior Scrutiny Adviser, and Steve Pearson, Manager – Communications and Media, which set out proposals for media skills and awareness training as part of a wider Member Development Programme.

Many Members during their personal development plan interviews have expressed a want to undertake media training. Since the last organised training in 2007, several key factors have changed.

Given that Councils have to deal with increasingly difficult decisions about resource allocation and service priorities, it was likely that the media would only continue to seek interviews to understand how these decisions were made. It was important, therefore, that Members be aware of Council protocols and be confident with techniques for communicating with the public and dealing with the media.

It was also important for the Local Authority to take every opportunity to publicise where, despite the current economic climate, excellent services were still being delivered and to demonstrate where good practice, success and positive outcomes continued to be achieved for local communities.

To support this, it was proposed that a three tiered approach be undertaken:-

Tier One - Generic awareness raising session aimed at all Members (particularly newly Elected Members) outlining how to handle press enquiries, Council protocols and some basic – do's and don'ts of social media.

Tier Two - Focus more on radio interviews or media contacts that were not held face to face. It was aimed at Councillors who have occasional contact with the media (such as Scrutiny Chairs or Area Assembly Chairs) with practice being in an interviewee presenting Council topics or news items (for example a

scrutiny review or community event]. You will learn what the media want from you and the types of story surrounding their 'agenda'.

Tier Three - A range of relevant interview practice scenarios in a workshop based on real "live" issues. Course content should cover how to approach local press, radio and TV interview opportunities with confidence; simple preparation formulae and key communication and personal presentation skills. Practice elements to include live interview examples, group discussion, working in pairs and individual role-play exercises. This was aimed at Senior Members whose role may demand regular contact with the media or were delivering key messages about resource allocation or services.

Tiers One and Two could be delivered in-house at a minimal cost, with repeat sessions if required. However, the advice from the Communications and Media Team was that Tier Three was best delivered by an external provider (based on previous experiences) to provide access to specialist equipment and to simulate the media environment of being interviewed by "non-officers". Quotes were, therefore, being sought for this workshop.

The Panel were in favour of media training for Tiers One and Two. However, in terms of Tier Three it was suggested that this not only include Members of the Executive, but also be extended to Select Commission Chairs and the Chairs of the Licensing and Planning Boards. The training that could be provided should be explored further and the cost met through the Member Development Budget.

Agreed:- (1) That the report be received and the contents noted.

(2) That the proposals for Tiers One and Two be supported.

(3) That the proposals for media skills and awareness training for Tier Three be explored further and that this be offered to Members of the Executive, Select Commission Chairs and the Chairs of the Licensing and Planning Boards.

## **11. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

Agreed:- That a further meeting be held on Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2012 at 11.00 a.m. in the Town Hall.