

MEMBERS' TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL

**Venue: Town Hall, Moorgate
Street, Rotherham. S60
2TH**

Date: Monday, 15 April 2013

Time: 11.00 a.m.

A G E N D A

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 17th December, 2012 (herewith) (Pages 1 - 4)
3. Report Writing and Plain English - Current Position (report herewith) (Pages 5 - 7)
4. Member Development Programme- Update (Spring 2013) (report herewith) (Pages 8 - 12)
5. Personal Development Plans (report herewith) (Pages 13 - 15)
6. Date and Time of Next Meeting - Monday, 10th June 2013 at 11.00 a.m.

**MEMBERS' TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL
MONDAY, 17TH DECEMBER, 2012**

Present:- Councillor Akhtar (in the Chair); The Mayor (Councillor Pickering), Councillors Dodson, Falvey, Gosling, Lakin, Sharman, Smith and Wootton.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Havenhand and Steele.

12. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 10TH SEPTEMBER, 2012

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 10th September, 2012, were agreed as a correct record.

13. LOCAL GOVERNMENT INFORMATION UNIT (LGIU) SUBSCRIPTION

Consideration was given to a request for a contribution from the Member Training and Development Panel budget to the annual LGiU membership costs for 2013.

As part of the range of budget savings being implemented across the Council, consideration had been given to cancelling LGiU membership (£19,600) for the 2012 calendar year and was met from the Commissioning, Policy and Performance budget.

The LGiU provided policy briefings and support as well as access to a range of training programmes and events. The service had been particularly valuable in recent times with a raft of national policy initiatives being launched and inhouse capacity reducing as a result of staffing reviews.

Given the severe budget pressures faced by the Authority and relatively high cost of membership, discussions had been held with the LGiU with regard to more affordable options. It had been established that downgrading from "standard plus" to "standard" membership would reduce the cost to £11,350.

If membership continued it was proposed that a full evaluation be carried out to determine the overall benefits and inform a decision on continued membership beyond 2013. It was worth noting that discussions were underway between a local authority and the LGiU to provide member development sessions in the South Yorkshire region at low or no cost to subscribing organisations. If events were hosted sub-regionally, they could supplement in-house provision and be built into future Member Development Programmes.

Discussion ensued on how worthwhile Members found the subscription. The majority view was that membership should continue for 2013 with a full evaluation conducted as to how useful Members had found the briefings and the potential savings in shared events.

Agreed:- (1) That a contribution of up to £5,000 to the annual LGiU membership costs for 2013 the maximum total cost of which would be £11,350.

(2) That a full evaluation of the benefits of membership be carried out in 2013 and be used to inform a longer term decision on membership.

14. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to an outline Member Development Programme for Spring, 2013.

A generic programme had been developed based on issues emerging from Personal Development Plans, matters arising from the induction programme and current important topics, for which training had been delivered in the period September to December, 2012.

It was proposed that an outline programme would be based on the following issues during the period January to April, 2013:-

- Members role in Emergency Planning
- Introduction to Local Government Finance
- Understanding Council priorities
- Health and Wellbeing agenda
- Media awareness and skills
- Countering Child Sexual Exploitation (additional sessions)
- Welfare Reform - dealing effectively with Casework

In addition to the organised programme, Members had access to one-to-one ICT support via Human Resources. The Members' Skills Profile, Learning Resource Guide and Learning and Development intranet site (Minute No. 15) had a range of e-learning packages that could be accessed by Members to complement planned sessions or support their own learning. Seminar sessions and one-to-one would raise awareness of the resource.

A 'Bring Your Own Device' Policy had been adopted which enabled Members and employees to access their Council e-mail, contacts, intranet and calendar from a non-Council owned smartphone or tablet. Approval had also been given for a trial of Council issued tablet computers as a potential alternative to Council issued laptops in order to test their suitability as laptop replacements and to judge their effectiveness in reducing reliance on paper agenda packs.

Discussion ensued on the proposed programme and felt that the following issues should also be included:-

- Sexual Aggression in teenagers
- Safeguarding
- Corporate Parenting
- Media Awareness (for all members)
- Public Sector Equality Duty

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

(2) That the proposed development opportunities, together with the suggested additions, be approved.

15. MEMBERS' SKILLS PROFILE, LEARNING RESOURCE GUIDE AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT INTRANET SITE

The Panel received a demonstration of the recently updated Learning and Development site including the newly developed Members' Skills Profile and supplementary Learning Resource Guide.

The core information from the Political Skills Framework Guidance, issued nationally by the Local Government Association, had been developed into a streamlined Rotherham Council Members' Skills Profile with the intention of being used as part of the Personal Development Plan process as a self-assessment tool to identify any areas for development.

In order to assist Members being able to identify available and appropriate learning and development, a supplementary Learning Resource Guide had also been developed.

As previously agreed, the new resources had been tested with a pilot group of Members (Councillors Smith, Steele and Andrews), and agreed some adjustments to the documents. The Members Learning and Development site had now been refreshed and the Skills Profile and Learning Resource Guide incorporated on the site which also included links to other relevant documents such as the Members Handbook, training calendar and links to useful website such as MORE.

The site and its core documents had been reviewed, tested and approved by the pilot group for wider use by all Members as part of the PDP process. The self-assessment asked each Member to reflect on the key skills and knowledge required to undertake their role, pointing to areas of expertise or required development. Areas of expertise could be shared by peer mentoring whilst the identified areas of development would be addressed via the Member Development Programme.

It was stressed that any information gathered would be confidential between the officer and Member concerned.

Agreed:- [1] That the use of the Skills Profile and Learning Resource Guide be included in the Personal Development Plan process.

[2] That the use of the Learning and Development site as a portal for Members to access relevant training, resources and information be approved.

[3] That a Member Seminar be organised to publicise the resource to all Members.

[4] That a further report be submitted in 12 months evaluating the effectiveness of the site, profile and resource guide.

16. TRAINING AND SUPPORT PRINCIPLES

Tracey Parkin, HR Manager, submitted for consideration guiding principles to be used for the approval of individual training requests, with associated costs.

The Members' training budget had been reduced over the last few years, however, it remained a priority that appropriate development activity be made available to Members. In order to balance competing needs and making the

best use of the budget, some guiding principles for the approval of individual training requests which incurred a cost (either course cost or travelling) would be beneficial:-

- The development need should have been identified previously in a Member's Personal Development Plan or be in an area that was subject to continuous change which the Member needed to be kept up-to-date
- Priority would be given to sub-regional and regional provision. Attendance at events beyond the region would only be approved if there was no similar local provision possible
- Attendance of more than 1 member would not normally be approved as they would be expected to cascade learning to colleagues
- There should be no repetition of learning from a previous event attended
- It should be confirmed that the learning could not be achieved by other no cost (or lower) means
- The event/session/programme should include a high proportion of actual learning

Agreed:- (1) That the proposed principles for the approval of individual training requests be approved.

(2) That should an individual training request be submitted as a matter of urgency, consideration be given to the request by the Chairman.

17. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Agreed:- That a further meeting be held on Monday, 11th March, 2013 at 11.00 a.m. in the Town Hall.

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
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1.	Meeting:	MEMBER DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING PANEL
2.	Date:	15th April 2013
3.	Title:	Report Writing and Plain English – Current Position
4.	Directorate:	Resources

5. Summary

This report summarises key issues with regard to the standard of report writing within Rotherham Borough Council and the provision of information in support of elected members.

6. Recommendations

That members:

- a. Consider the impact of previous action taken to raise awareness of the issues with RMBC staff**
- b. Determine whether more detailed evaluation is required.**
- c. Agree if further action is required following this assessment.**

7. Proposals and Details

Communicating and engaging with others is a key competency for all managers within Rotherham Borough Council, and report writing is an important element of this. Reports are used within the Council to support the work of officers; externally to communicate the position or view of the authority to partner or other organisations/groups; to inform and assist members in carrying out their duties, and to support the system of governance through Full Council, Cabinet, Delegated Powers, Scrutiny and other elected member meetings.

Reports can be used to summarise lengthy issues; translate complex or technical information into a language and format that is easily understood by the target audience and put forward recommendations to facilitate the decision-making process.

In addition, the style and content of reports (including spelling, grammar and punctuation) can impact positively or negatively on the reputation of the Council.

However, it has been identified on a number of occasions in the past that the standard of report writing – particularly in the context of providing information for elected members – needed to be improved.

In February 2012, the Members' Training and Development Panel agreed that guidance be issued across the Council to highlight the need for improvements to be made – particularly with regard to the use of plain English.

The views of elected members on the impact of this guidance are integral to determining whether further action is required.

8. Finance

There are no costs associated with the further dissemination or implementation of guidance through standard RMBC staff communications channels.

It is the responsibility of individual managers to use the guidance and in turn their line manager to performance manage against the key communications competency within the performance and development review process. It may be necessary in future to identify further mechanisms for improving performance, such as additional training sessions, with potential cost implications.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

The Member Development Strategy aims to train and equip Rotherham MBC Members to take on the duties of the modern local councillor. Failure to put a comprehensive programme in place may limit the opportunity for councillors to develop their abilities and skills, which will in the long term, impact negatively on the effectiveness of the Council as a whole.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

11. Background Papers and Consultation

RMBC Plain English Guide

RMBC Guidance for Reports to Members

Contact: Tracy Homes, Head of Corporate Communications and Marketing,
01709 822735; tracy.holmes@rotherham.gov.uk

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
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1.	Meeting:	MEMBER DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING PANEL
2.	Date:	15th April, 2013
3.	Title:	Member Development Programme- Update (Spring 2013)
4.	Directorate:	Resources

5. Summary

This report provides an update on progress in respect of Member Development.

6. Recommendations

That Members:

- a. Note the report and its content**
- b. Comment on priority areas for development to be included in the programme.**
- c. Give approval for further work to take place with other authorities/agencies to maximise development opportunities as outlined in Paras 7.4 and 7.5**
- d. Discuss the emerging issues outlined in Section 8 and receive a future paper on developing the member development function to support Members' needs.**
- e. Approve the request for the following development sessions as part of the Summer/Autumn programme:**
 - Dealing with difficult situations
 - Mediation skills

7. Proposals and Details

- 7.1 The Elected Member Development Programme recognises the different roles of Members and the needs that arise with changes at a national, regional, sub regional and local level.

Members have previously agreed that programmes will be based on local priorities as identified in the Council's corporate plan and Members individual skills needs identified in the personal development planning process. The programme will 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 will suit the needs of different learners, as well as make learning more accessible to Members.

Additional bulletins on courses or training have been circulated to Members as development opportunities have arisen. This includes events supported by the Regional Member Development Network, either on a Yorkshire-wide or sub-regional basis as well as offers of places on courses organised by other authorities or bodies. These courses provide a value for money option as travel and joining costs are kept to a minimum.

7.2 Winter/Spring Programme December 2012-May 2013

A generic programme has been developed based on issues emerging from PDPs, matters arising from the induction programme and current important topics. This programme will run until end of May. These sessions include:

- Countering Child Sexual Exploitation
- Media Awareness and Skills
- Welfare Reform- Handling Casework Effectively
- Faster Reading Skills
- Corporate Parenting (to run)
- Public Sector Equality Duty (to run)
- Members Role in Emergency Planning (to run)
- Introduction to Local Government Finance (to run)

Evaluation sheets have been circulated after each session. When completed, feedback has been, on the whole, positive. Suggestions for additional development or changes have been used to inform future programmes.

In addition to the scheduled programme, Members will be aware of the introduction of iPads; in order to maximise the effective usage of tablets, each Member has been contacted to discuss their individual learning needs, with bespoke one-to-one or group support provided as necessary. Other ICT training or use of the e-casework system is provided on request.

A full review of training activity for 2012/13 will be submitted in an annual report to the next meeting of this committee.

7.3 **Summer/Autumn Programme 2013**

Planning for the summer/autumn 2013 programme is underway. With the absence of Borough elections in 2013, there is not the requirement to plan for substantial induction training for new Members. Therefore it is suggested that the programme should focus on consolidating Members' skills and knowledge, particularly around the changing policy landscape. Members' views are sought on priority areas for development to feed into the spring/autumn programme.

As with previous years, every effort is made to support Members in their leadership roles by meeting their specific training needs (for example Leadership Academy or bespoke programmes). Should there be Members nominated into new positions at the Annual General Meeting of Council, every effort will be made to identify learning or development needs as appropriate

As greater expense is usually attached to leadership courses, requests will be brought to this Panel for approval, in order that a decision can be made based on the availability of resources and existing member development priorities (or in the interim, to the Chair for his decision).

7.4 **Discussions with other Authorities/bodies**

Officers are part of strong Member Development Officer Network in South Yorkshire and across the wider Yorkshire and Humber region. As part of this we are developing a number of shared, sustainable resources which can be used and adapted by each Council. These are available via the Learning and Development intranet page.

In addition, officers are keen to share good practice and knowledge with other authorities, and to maximise value for money, share resources wherever appropriate. To this end, places have been offered to South Yorkshire Joint Secretariat on the recent Faster Reading Skills course on a reciprocal basis. There is also an opportunity to host a Social Media Skills course, using the remainder of the RIEP funding, possibly with Members from other Authorities. Members views are sought on this proposals.

Discussions are also underway at a sub-regional level to utilize the training expertise of LGiU to deliver sessions locally. Further details of this will be reported to a future MDTP. In addition, a number of free national and regional events are also being arranged through Local Government Yorkshire and Humber and the Local Government Association. Details have been shared with Members on an 'as and when' basis.

7.5 **Parliamentary Outreach**

Via the Member Development Network, contact has recently been made with the group Parliament Outreach – a service run by the Houses of Parliament offering free learning opportunities for local authorities on topics such as:

- Understanding the work of parliament and the passage of legislation
- Good practice sharing between Select Committees and local authority Overview and Scrutiny Boards.

Members views are sought on whether they wish to explore this opportunity either solely within Rotherham or with other authorities in South Yorkshire?

8. Emerging Issues

There are a number of key challenges facing Members, It is important that Members are supported to anticipate the impact of Government policy changes on residents and communities and are involved in and kept up to speed with the change process. The following outlines areas that will potentially impact on how Members work within communities and how Member Development support is designed and delivered. . It is proposed that further papers are submitted to MDTP outlining how the member development function supports Members effectively.

8.1.1 Welfare Reform

Initial sessions have been held on welfare reform and managing casework. Feedback on the sessions has been overwhelmingly positive, with some requests for further areas for skill development including:

- Dealing with difficult situations
- Mediation between different groups or individuals

There has also been a request for information sheets to be circulated to Members for use in surgeries to help Members signpost residents seeking assistance.

Clearly, this is a rapidly changing agenda, and as the reforms are rolled out, it is likely that Ward Councillors will see the impact of these in their surgeries. It is vital therefore that they are confident to deal with the issues confidently and competently.

8.1.2 Community Leadership

As pressure on resources becomes more acute, it is likely that more people will look to their ward Members to seek assurance and assistance, and to act as 'community advocates' on their behalf:

- What skills will Members require or consolidate to help them perform this role effectively.
- Are there skills and knowledge that can be shared from a Member's perspective through the Deprived Neighbourhoods/Families for Change agenda; particularly on successes, handling difficult situations and lessons learnt.

8.1.3 Reputational issues

Recognising that Councils face a difficult task in times of austerity, the Local Government Association has launched a 'Reputation' Campaign. The campaign focuses on three main issues:

- Leadership: having clarity about what the council stands for and making sure it is understood by the whole organisation.
- Brand: having a clear sense of purpose and believing and living your values.
- Strategic communications: having the right skills to improve your reputation.

Members have a key role as part of their wider community leadership responsibilities, to champion residents but also to act as an ambassador for the Council and wider borough. What skills and knowledge are required to support Members to undertake these roles effectively?

Related to broader reputational issues, in recent months, we have put on a number of Media Skills and Awareness sessions, focussing on key, consistent messages and protocols, including more tailored training for Members in leadership positions. There may be future opportunities to access skills training on using social media in the near future.

9. Finance

All activity is funded through the Member Development and Training Budget. The majority of development sessions are offered in-house, however if specialist skills or equipment are required, an external provider may be sought. The budget is monitored regularly and depending on the level of demand or emerging needs, a further reprioritisation of resources by MTDP may need to take place

10. Risks and Uncertainties

The Member Development Strategy aims to train and equip Rotherham MBC Members to take on the duties of the modern local councillor. Failure to put a comprehensive programme in place may limit the opportunity for councillors to develop their abilities and skills, which will in the long term, impact negatively on the effectiveness of the Council as a whole.

11. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Local government has faced unprecedented change in recent years. The member development programme should assist Members to understand the implications of these changes and their impact on the Council and wider borough.

12. Background Papers and Consultation

Member Development Strategy (2011)
Personal Development Interviews
Member Development Programme: December 2012-May 2013

Contact:

Caroline Webb, Senior Scrutiny Adviser (01709) 822765:
caroline.webb@rotherham.gov.uk

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
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1.	Meeting:	MEMBER DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING PANEL
2.	Date:	15th April 2013
3.	Title:	Personal Development Plan
4.	Directorate:	Resources

5. Summary

This report asks for Members' views on the Personal Development Plan process.

6. Recommendations

That members:

- a. Note the content of the report;**
- b. Agree that all Members should undertake the self-assessment prior to their PDP;**
- c. Approve the proposal to conduct PDPs on a two-year cycle on the rolling programme outlined in Para 7.4**

7. Proposals and Details

7.1 PDPs allow Members to consider their own skills and strengths against:

- their specific roles and interests;
- broader Council and Borough-wide priorities;
- rapid changes in Government policy and legislation.

Any identified learning and development needs can then be fed into the on-going programme to ensure that individual needs are not overlooked.

All Members have previously been invited to undertake a PDP interview, although with such a high proportion of Members being elected since 2011, the focus has been on equipping these Members with the skills and knowledge to undertake their role effectively.

7.2 At its last meeting, the MTDP approved the Members Skills Profile and supplementary Learning Resource Guide (accessed via the Member's Learning and Development intranet page) to be used as the part of the Personal Development Plan (PDP) process.

The site and its core documents have been reviewed, tested and approved by the MTDP for wider use by Members as part of the PDP process. The self-assessment asks each Member to reflect on the key skills and knowledge required to undertake their role; pointing to areas of expertise or required development. A demonstration of the resources and intranet page was given at a recent Member Seminar.

7.3 In order to provide further structure to the process, guide discussion and signpost to additional resources, it is proposed that all Members are asked to undertake the self-assessment prior to a PDP taking place and for this to form the PDP discussions.

7.4 Although the MTDP agreed in principle that PDPs should take place annually, in practice not all members have responded to requests to arrange convenient slots when these can take place. Furthermore, the capacity of officers to support Member Development has been much reduced and it has proved difficult to maintain the commitment to accommodate the volume of work required to undertake annual reviews of all Member's Personal Development needs.

Therefore to ensure Member's development needs are captured on a timely basis, Members' views are sought on extending the current commitment to undertake a PDP annually to conducting a PDP at least once every two years.

7.5 Should approval be given to a two year cycle, in order to prioritise PDPs it is proposed that a rolling programme is established from May 2013 – April 2015:

- Phase1: Cabinet Members, Chairs of Regulatory Boards, Overview and Scrutiny Chairs/Vice-Chairs, Chairs of Area Assemblies
- Phase 2: Members elected since 2011
- Phase 3: Other Members

Should additional individual development needs be identified in the interim, this can be picked up through informal discussions with relevant officers, by email or request through the Member's Learning and Development site.

- 7.6 As with previous years, any Members newly elected following the 2014 election, will receive an invitation to participate in PDP shortly after the induction period. Whilst some planning can be undertaken to anticipate likely demand, this will need to be assessed following the election and resources allocated accordingly.

8. Finance

All development activity is funded through the Member Development and Training Budget. The budget is monitored regularly and depending on the level of demand or emerging needs, a further reprioritisation of resources by MTDP may need to take place. Officer support is factored into existing budgets.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Given the rapid changes in the local government landscape, it is essential that Member learning and development is responsive to identified needs. Failure to identify these needs effectively on an organised and systematic basis, may limit the opportunity for councillors to develop their abilities and skills and lead to inefficient use of resources. This reports sets out a programme to prioritise learning and development opportunities within existing resource limitations.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Local government has faced unprecedented change in recent years. The member development programme should assist Members to understand the implications of these changes and their impact on the Council and wider borough.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Member Development Strategy (2011)

Personal Development Interviews

Members Skills Profile, Learning Resource Guide and Learning and Development intranet site

Members' Training and Development Panel, 17th December, 2012: Minute 15

Contact:

Caroline Webb, Senior Scrutiny Adviser (01709) 822765:
caroline.webb@rotherham.gov.uk