

MEMBERS' TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL

**Venue: Town Hall, Moorgate
Street, Rotherham.**

**Date: Thursday, 25 September
2008**

Time: 1.30 p.m.

A G E N D A

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 24th July, 2008 (herewith) (Pages 1 - 4)
3. Update on Member ICT (report herewith) (Pages 5 - 9)
4. Member Opinion Survey (Presentation by Debby Robinson, Senior HR Officer)
5. Member Development Activities Update (report herewith) (Pages 10 - 12)
6. Date and Time of Next Meeting - Thursday, 23rd October, 2008 at 2.00 p.m.

MEMBERS' TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL
24th July, 2008

Present:- Councillor Gosling (in the Chair); The Mayor (Councillor G. A. Russell); Councillors Austen, Cutts, Foden, Hodgkiss, Lakin, McNeely, Pickering, Sangster, Smith, Turner, Whelbourn and Whysall.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Littleboy, Rushforth and Sharman.

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 26TH JUNE, 2008

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 26th June, 2008 were agreed as a correct record.

2. MEMBERSHIP

It was noted that Councillor Barron had been nominated by the Adult Services and Health Scrutiny Panel to serve on the Members' Training and Development Panel for the municipal year 2008/09.

3. SOUTH YORKSHIRE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME - MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

Sioned-Mair Richards, Scrutiny Adviser, presented the submitted report updating on the work of the member development strand of the South Yorkshire Improvement Programme.

The Member group of the South Yorkshire Improvement Programme met on 11th July, 2008 and development opportunities agreed for Rotherham included:-

(a) Mentoring-for up to three leading Members

(b) Ward Walkabouts – the opportunity to undertake a ward walkabout with an IDeA Member peer would be offered to all wards with new councillors. They would take place in September, 2008 following workshops on the use of Ward profiles

(c) A scrutiny skills programme to be developed in conjunction with Barnsley and Doncaster

(d) A report was expected in November, 2008 regarding the Political Skills Consultancy undertaking research arising from the Councillors' Commission recommendation on working with employers

(e) A conference was to be held on 27th November, 2008, in Barnsley to look at 'The Member Role in LAA's and Other Partnerships'

Agreed:- That the information be noted.

4. IDeA LOCAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE 2008

Sioned-Mair Richards, Scrutiny Adviser, presented the submitted report relating to the above seeking delegates to attend the annual IDeA Member Development Conference to be held in Milton Keynes on 3rd September, 2008.

Agreed:- That Councillors Austen, Lakin (Fire Authority), Pickering, Sangster and Turner be authorised to attend the above.

5. EMPOWERMENT WHITE PAPER AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE COUNCILLORS' COMMISSION

Sioned-Mair Richards, Scrutiny Adviser, introduced the following submitted paperwork relating to the above :

- summary of the Empowerment White Paper
- LGIU briefing on the Empowerment White Paper
- questions which the White Paper may raise
- LGIU commentary on the Government response to the Councillors' Commission report
- Government response to the Councillors' Commission report
- IDeA leaflets "Do you want to make a difference?" and "how you can make a difference"

Discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues were covered:-

- need to study the documentation and get involved fully
- need to take every opportunity to promote local democracy
- Councillor presence at the Rotherham Show
- Local Democracy Week
- need for accountability when empowering community
- need for more devolved budgets for area assemblies
- "Rotherhamising" the Swansea leaflet with reference also to parish councils

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

(2) That any comments on the documentation be forwarded to Sioned.

(3) That the documentation be referred to the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel for consideration

(4) That an elected member presence be made at the Rotherham Show.

6. AUTUMN PROGRAMME 2008

Sioned-Mair Richards, Scrutiny Adviser, reported briefly on upcoming events, indicating that the programme should be complete by the end of the month.

The programme would include:

- Local Government Finance made interesting – 23rd/24th September
- How budgets are put together : October workshops for each scrutiny panel
- Local Area Agreement : October workshop
- Workshops relating to : Planning training
 Community Leadership Fund
 Appeals Procedures

Reference was made to the need for a session covering standing orders/constitution/meeting rules and protocol.

Agreed:- That the information be noted.

7. IT UPDATE

Sioned-Mair Richards, Scrutiny Adviser, reported that only six elected members were not on broadband and that users were generally happy. There had been a few complaints regarding being 'timed out'.

Agreed:- That Members advise Sioned of any issues.

8. PURCHASE OF PORTABLE LOOP SYSTEM

Sioned-Mair Richards reported that eventually there would be a hearing loop system in all meeting rooms in the Town Hall. In the meantime details of a portable hearing loop system were submitted.

It was felt that all area assemblies should possess a portable hearing loop system and the possibility of a P.A. system for area assemblies was also suggested.

Agreed:- (1) That one hearing loop system be obtained on a trial basis.

(2) That the issue of a P.A. system for area assemblies be referred to the meeting of area assembly chairs for consideration.

9. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Agreed:- That the next meeting of the Panel be held on Thursday, 25th September, 2008 at 2.00 p.m.

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Members' Training and Development Panel
2.	Date:	25th September, 2008
3.	Title:	Update on Member ICT
4.	Directorate:	Financial Services

5. Summary

This is an update on recent Member ICT developments and also presents some information on proposals for further work in this area.

6. Recommendations

Note the developments to date and comment on the proposed future developments.

7. Proposals and Details

Introduction

The Council's Refreshed ICT Strategy, which was agreed by Cabinet on 25th June 2008, has 7 key themes. One of these is "Member Focus" which recognises the importance of giving elected Members the right technology and training to enable them to meet the challenges of their changing roles. The ICT Strategy outlined the following key objectives under this theme:

- Enable elected representatives to gain access to, and use, modern technology in support of their role as Community Leaders;
- Create skilled, technology confident elected Members through investing in learning, development and training opportunities; and
- Through the strategic use of technology, provide elected representatives with information relating to their Ward at a time appropriate to their needs.

The Transformation and Strategic Partnerships Team are working with the Member Development Team to ensure that these objectives are achieved. The Strategy outlines some of the specific deliverables that will underpin these objectives:-

- We will provide elected representatives with high-speed, secure and supported internet, and appropriate systems access from a variety of locations, including their homes;
- We will review the technology requirements of elected representatives on a regular basis;
- We will produce a menu of options for elected representatives to 'get better connected';
- We will investigate and implement a range of appropriate technology-based consultation tools to improve our engagement with communities and individuals;
- We will provide elected representatives with up-to-date online information about their Ward;
- We will provide planned learning and development so as to ensure elected Members acquire and update their technology skills to enable them to respond to citizens' demands; and
- We will implement the Modern Councillor e-Learning Module.

The following sections summarise some of the work that is underway to deliver on these commitments.

Laptops and Broadband

Since March, 2008, the Transformation and Strategic Partnerships Team and the Member Development Team – supported by RBT – have been jointly responsible for overseeing the rollout of new laptops and business class broadband connections to Members which has led to significant improvements for Members. Feedback indicates that Members have been pleased with the ease of installation and

appreciate the vast improvement which broadband makes to their email, intranet and internet access. It has made communicating with constituents and other parts of the Council easier and has aided casework. Currently, 56 Members have taken advantage of a new laptop and/or broadband. Some of the positive comments are as follows:

“In my opinion it is a great step forward.”

“This has made an enormous difference in respect of improved connectivity. Dial up was so slow and frustrating; also the improved programmes available are becoming quite useful. I found the installation quite painless which along with a short introduction made for a good service delivery from the technician who called.”

“In short, like having a Rolls Royce after a Reliant Robin – not that I’ve had either, but you know what I mean. It’s excellent, no difficulties found so far.”

Nearly all Members are now on the new system. It means they can download papers in minutes instead of hours, access minutes immediately which thus allows them to more effectively manage their workload.

Training

Enabling Members through effective training is also important to enable them to most effectively utilise the new infrastructure.

The Transformation and Strategic Partnerships Team and the Member Development Team have started working with Strategic HR to build a package of training for Members. Members will be consulted as part of this development process. We will identify Member training needs using an online tool which helps identify any gaps between the skills that Members already have and the skills they require.

Access to Information

There are a number of initiatives in this area:

- Area Based Profiling – A project has started to use small area data and statistics to better understand the aspirations and concerns of the citizens that the Members represent. We will be creating an Intranet system which allows Members and officers to understand the lifestyles and preferences of the citizens of Rotherham down to individual post code level, enabling Members to be better informed about their communities.
- e-Consultation – The first phase of the new e-Consultation database has gone live during 2008, this allows Members and officers to have a single online view of all the consultation that is happening, has happened and will be happening in Rotherham. During 2009 this tool will be made available online to citizens to allow them to view all consultation and take part in those exercises that interest them the most.
- e-Petitioning – The Council, through its membership of the ‘e@sy connects’ consortium has worked with Sheffield, Barnsley and Doncaster to develop an

online e-Petitioning system. This system will begin trials in Rotherham during September 2008.

- e-Casework – Work has started on looking at how to facilitate an efficient and effective e-casework system for Members. Some examples from other authorities are being investigated to inform this work.

Member's Office Environment and the Modern Town Hall

As part of the Council's WorkSmart project, work has started to explore the accommodation needs of Members including a modern Council Chamber and well connected meeting and working spaces. A joint Cabinet/CMT meeting was held on 5th September to explore these accommodation needs and the ways that ICT could help facilitate them.

8. Finance

The following initiatives are funded from ICT Capital:-

- Laptops for members
- Broadband for members
- Access to Information
- Member ICT training

The projected spending profile, for the next 3 years, for these initiatives is:-

2008 - £95,000

2009 - £64,000

2010 - £64,000

The Member's Office Environment and the Modern Town Hall is still in the planning stage and costs are not yet known. It is likely that this project will be funded through a combination of ICT Capital and Town Centre Accommodation budgets.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Failing to invest in ICT infrastructure and training for Members will impact on their ability to most effectively carry out their roles.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Investing in ICT infrastructure and training for Members supports all corporate strategies and plans.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

None.

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ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1. Meeting:	MEMBER DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING PANEL
2. Date:	25TH SEPTEMBER 2008
3. Title:	MEMBER DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES UPDATE
4. Programme Area:	Chief Executive's

5. Summary

This report summarises Member Development activities undertaken in the last months.

6. Recommendations

Members are asked to comment on the member development initiatives undertaken and discuss extending work on Promoting the Role of Members

7. Proposals and Details

a. Post Graduate Course in Local Government Modernisation

The University of Huddersfield offers a Certificate/Diploma/MSc in Local Government Modernisation which is aimed at councillors. LGY&H offered to fund councillors to undertake this course. Information was circulated to all Members and as a result four Rotherham councillors are to undertake the initial Certificate.

b. IDeA Local Leadership Conference – Milton Keynes – 3rd September

This annual conference was attended by Cllrs Pickering, Lakin, Austen, Turner and Hughes accompanied by the Member Development Officer. We attended a variety of workshops and made some impact as an officer of the LGIU phoned to compliment us on our work, having heard a councillor speaking in a workshop!

c. Rotherham Show

Following the discussions at the July meeting of the Panel, there was a stand at the Rotherham Show promoting the role of councillors. There were two panels (see attached) and a leaflet. The stand was staffed by a rota of councillors on both days and received a positive response from the public. There was a small prize draw which had “Tea for Two” with the Mayor as the prize. Members views on extending the work in this area will be welcome.

d. Ward Walkabouts

Walkabouts are currently being undertaken by all new Members in their wards week beginning 15th September. A verbal update will be given at the meeting.

e. Local Democracy Week

A group chaired by Cllr Hussain has been meeting to plan events. It is hoped to have some events during the week – Question Time, Speed Dating – but to then have an event a month so as to have Local Democracy Year. This will involve work with the Youth Cabinet including a workshop with Members to develop a Presentation for councillors to give in schools about the role of the local councillor in local democracy.

f. Member Development Programme

The programme is underway. We are still negotiating with a trainer for the Scrutiny workshops.

g. South Yorkshire Improvement Programme

The programme is in its final months of work – it finishes in December. The final main event will be the conference “Take your partner...” to be held at the Media Centre, Barnsley on Thursday 27th November.

8. Finance

Member Development activities are funded from the Member Development budget.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

There is a continuing need to update the skills and knowledge of Members as the role of the local councillor changes. Support for councillors undertaking new roles is important if they are to be able to meet the challenges and make a success of their new responsibilities.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The CPA "Direction of Travel" document requires the council, amongst other things, to set out how it is developing the capacity of Members to deliver its ambitions. The varied programme of development activities undertaken by Members demonstrates that Rotherham takes Member Development seriously.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

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