

**MEMBERS' TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL
THURSDAY, 16TH FEBRUARY, 2012**

Present:- Councillor Stone (in the Chair); Councillors Buckley, Dodson, Lakin, Pickering, Sharman, Steele and Whelbourn.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gosling, Rushforth, G. A. Russell, Wootton and Mrs. C. Cockayne.

74. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 15TH DECEMBER, 2012

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 15th December, 2011, were agreed as a correct record.

75. CIVIC HEADS' TRAINING SEMINAR

Consideration was given to a Civic Heads' Training Seminar to be held on 6th March, 2012, in Bradford City Hall. The seminar was aimed at prospective ceremonial Lord Mayors, Mayors, Consorts, Deputies, Chairpersons and Civic Office support staff.

Agreed:- That the newly elected Deputy Mayor and Mayoress plus 2 officers attend the Seminar.

76. IMPROVING THE STANDARD OF REPORT WRITING WITHIN ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Tracy Holmes, Head of Corporate Communications and Marketing, presented a proposal to raise awareness amongst managers across the Council about the need to improve their report writing skills particularly with regard to the provision of information in support of Elected Member. It would complement existing operational guidance e.g. the Plain English Guide.

It had been identified on a number of occasions that the standard of report writing needed to be improved. Appendix 1 of the report submitted provided Managers with guidance on how they could personally improve their skills and referenced other operational documents which were also available to provide support. It was proposed that the document be reviewed and refreshed with immediate effect.

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised:-

- The development need was not simply about the need to use plain language but rather about a number of questions to be asked before a report was prepared – outlined in the report
- A technical report e.g. Planning Board should include a simple plain English summary
- Expand the use of electronic means rather than hard copies

Agreed:- (1) That the draft Report Writer's Guidance be supported.

(2) That the guidance be circulated across the Council as a Manager Briefing

to highlight the need for the standard of report writing to be improved, particularly with regard to the use of plain English.

(3) That the guidance be included in the Member Induction booklet.

(4) That a report be submitted in 6 months on the perceived impact of the guidance on reports received by Elected Members.

77. DRAFT SPRING PROGRAMME - 2012

Consideration was given to an outline Member Development Programme for Spring, 2012.

Based on the review of learning needs and the outcomes of the personal development interviews, Council priorities and other emerging issues, the Programme was likely to comprise of:-

Ward/individual

- Case work/E-case work
- Emergency Planning
- Health and Safety
- Chairing skills
- Role of Councillors as Corporate Parents
- Safeguarding
- Ethical Frameworks
- Understanding the 'new' local government agenda (localism, health, policing)
- Role of Councillors as Community Leaders

Portfolio

- Leadership
- Finance and budgets
- Familiarity with areas of responsibility
- Understanding the 'new' local government agenda related to portfolios and leadership roles

Overview and Scrutiny Select Commissions

- Chairing meetings
- Effective questioning
- Localism
- Finance
- Health Reforms
- Performance management and self-regulation
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- Regulatory
- Updates on new Legislation/developments relevant to:-
 - Licensing
 - Planning
 - Standards
 - Audit Committee

Partnership

- Representation on other bodies
- Working in the community

ICT and inter-personal skills

- New forms of media and electronic communications
- Utilisation of all forms of technology
- Social media and community leadership
- Handling the media/public speaking
- Handling difficult situations

Discussion took place on the need for Members to have an understanding of Health and Wellbeing and Public Health agendas.

Agreed:- (1) That the proposed Spring programme 2012 be agreed.

(2) That workshops on the changing Health and Well-Being and Public Health agenda be organised.

(3) That a further report be submitted to the next meeting.

78. NEW MEMBER INDUCTION 2012

Consideration was given to the draft Members' Induction Programme circulated by Caroline Webb, Senior Scrutiny Adviser.

The aim of the induction programme was to help new Members familiarise themselves with the Authority and their new role and covered 3 main areas:-

- Getting to know the Council
- Getting to know your Areas
- Getting to know your Role

As in previous years, Lead Members would be invited to make an input to the relevant sessions.

Alongside 'in-house' programme the LGA was planning a 'New Councillor Roadshow'. Details were to be confirmed but likely to be regional events in July or September.

Agreed:- (1) That the information be noted and the draft programme be approved.

(2) That the timetable be circulated when completed.

79. OVERVIEW OF TRAINING ACTIVITY 2011- 12

Consideration was given to the Member Development and Training activity that had taken place since May, 2011, which included:-

- Refresher training on fraud and corruption
- Local Development Framework
- New Localism

- Corporate Parenting
- Safeguarding (Children)
- Safeguarding (Adult)
- E-Casework
- Health and Safety
- Project Argus

Unfortunately few evaluation forms had been received, therefore, difficult to judge the effectiveness of the courses on offer. However, informal feedback and comments given in Personal Development Plans had been largely favourable.

The majority of Members (approximately 69 out of 63) had taken up at least 1 organised training or development opportunity since May, 2011 with many Members attending multiple courses. This did not take account of e-learning, information sessions with officers or attendance at Member Seminars.

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Agreed:- That the report be noted.

80. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(1) Conferences

A free regional conference entitled "Think Local Act Personal" was to be held on 30th March, 2012.

Agreed:- That details be supplied to the Health and Wellbeing Board, Cabinet Member and advisors for Health and Wellbeing and the Health Select Commission.

A LGA Housing and Planning Master Class to be held on 15th March, 2012. Details had been supplied to members for expressions of interest.

(2) Dates/Times of Meetings

Agreed:- That consideration be given to the date and time of meetings during the 2012/13 Municipal Year.

81. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Agreed:- That a further meeting be held on Thursday, 26th April, 2012 at 2.00 p.m. in the Town Hall.