

**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 10<sup>th</sup> 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.