

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

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

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