

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1. Meeting:	MEMBER DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING PANEL
2. Date:	17th March 2014
3. Title:	NEW MEMBER INDUCTION 2014
4. Directorate:	Resources

5. Summary

This report asks Members to consider draft proposals for the induction programme for newly elected Members in 2014.

6. Recommendations

That Members:

- a. comment on the structure, timing and contents of the draft programme;**
- b. consider how best to facilitate established member involvement in the induction programme;**
- c. comment on the contents of the handbook.**

7. Proposals and Details

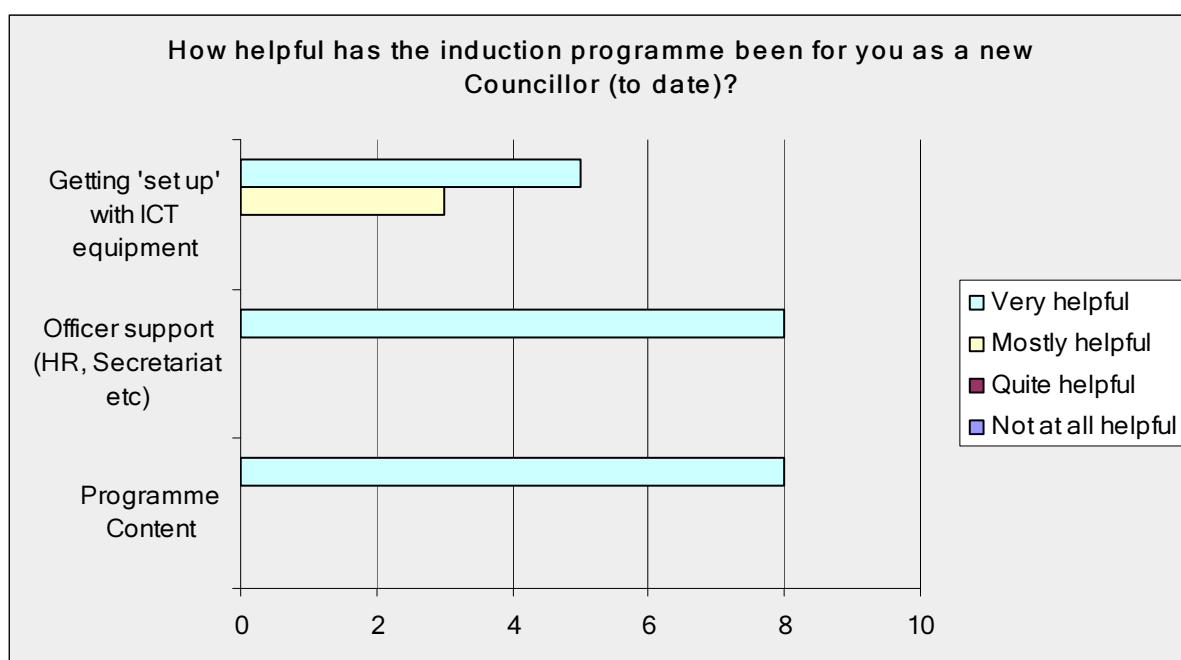
A comprehensive induction programme for newly Elected Members is delivered following each local election. The aim of the induction programme is to help new Members familiarise themselves with their new role and covers three main areas:

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

It is important that the Member Development Training Panel has an input into the content and delivery of the induction programme to ensure that it meets the needs of newly Elected Members and those Members with new roles / responsibilities.

7.1 Feedback from 2012 Induction Programme

A basic evaluation of the 2012 programme was carried out in order to improve the process for future years. Eight of the eleven new members responded (72% response). The overall response was positive with the overwhelming number of comments falling into the 'good' or 'very good' categories; none of the sessions were evaluated as 'poor'.



Discussions are ongoing with officers about the provision of ICT support. These are subject to further reports to be considered by Cabinet in due course.

Whilst feedback was positive, specific comments were raised about delivery, timing, content and member involvement. These comments are addressed below.

7.2 Delivery of sessions

The 2012 programme was delivered over a six week period immediately following the election. A number of members have commented that whilst the content of the programme was helpful, it was difficult to ‘take-in’ the volume of information in a relatively concentrated period of time.

To some extent, this was reflected in the fall-off in attendance. Although attendance was good at the earlier sessions, the latter sessions were often poorly attended with a number of cancelled when numbers were not viable (for example emergency planning and introduction to licensing).

It was difficult to ascertain why this happened, however anecdotally some members reported that they found it difficult to attend numerous sessions running over several weeks in the period following elections.

It is suggested therefore that a two-tiered approach is taken. The first part of the programme will be a concentrated two-day session covering ‘essential’ information in the days immediately following the election. (A draft programme is attached below for members’ comments.) If agreed, all prospective candidates will be contacted prior to the election and asked to commit to these sessions (if successful).

Draft Programme (immediately after the election):

<p>Getting to know the Council</p> <p>(Day One)</p> <p>Tuesday May 27th</p> <p>(starting pm)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome and intro to Rotherham (Leader of the Council & Chief Executive) • How the Council Works <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cabinet and member structures • Information on protocols/conduct including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Council’s constitution - Council’s code of conduct/standards - Protocols officer/member relations • Finding your way round the Annual Meeting and Full Council
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about councillors’ allowances & other financial matters (car parking, tax etc) • Photographs – passes etc • Tour of the Town Hall • ICT support • Member support

<p>Getting to know your role (Day Two)</p> <p>Wednesday May 28th</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What I wish I'd known when I first got elected • 'A day in the life of a councillor' case studies • Surgeries and casework • Understanding personal safety
<p>Getting to know your area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about the range of local services including : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet the Senior Leadership Team - Council's departmental structure, external partnerships and key contacts - Introduction to partnership working – Area Assemblies - Working with town and parish councils

7.3 Timing of sessions

The evaluation of the 2012 programme showed a number of members had a very strong preference for evening sessions to accommodate their working commitments. This practice has since been built into other programmes (subject to the availability of venue/facilitators).

It is suggested that if possible, the sessions should be organised around an afternoon/early evening pattern to minimise disruption to employment or other day-time commitments. Views are sought on this proposal.

7.4 Content

Should members agree to a two-tier approach to induction, it is suggested that the in-depth programme covers the following areas:

- Member's role in the community
- Undertaking casework.
 - Understanding ward data
 - Handling difficult situations
 - Giving difficult messages
- Understanding overview and scrutiny
- Understanding Council priorities
- Equality and diversity
- Introduction to planning and licensing
- Members' role as corporate parents

- Safeguarding
- Member's role in emergency planning
- Communication and media (including social media)
- Council website – accessing information and services online
- Speaking and contributing to meetings
- Questioning skills
- Introduction to local government finance.

Members are asked for comments on the suggested programme and if there are any additional areas to be covered.

The programme would be scheduled to run over the course of the municipal year, with elements forming part of the generic member development programme.

It is anticipated that the majority of sessions will be delivered in-house, with any additional costs for external facilitation met through the Member Development budget.

7.5 Member involvement

Established Members were involved in the delivery of sessions to ensure that their perspective and knowledge was reflected and communicated. All respondents commented favorably on this input, with half of respondents stating that it was “very useful”.

Specific comments include:

“It's always good to know whose brain you are able to pick...”

“They have a wealth of experience and it is important for new members to learn from them...”

As with previous years, it is suggested that Members are involved in the delivery of the 2014 programme. Members' views are sought on how member's input can be best facilitated.

7.6 Additional information

Each newly Elected Member will receive a handbook after the election. This provides information on the day to day running of the Council, the support services available and contact details of relevant staff. Each new member will also receive a hard copy of the Local Government Association's Guide for New Councillors (electronic copies are also available).

The 2012 handbook is attached for comments (Appendix A)

8. Finance

The cost of running the induction programme will be met through the Member Development budget.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

If there is no induction programme, new Members will have to learn their way round the council by 'trial and error'. Induction will allow Members to make an early contribution to the work of the council and so represent their local communities more effectively.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

It is important that newly elected members are briefed and equipped to carry out their democratic and community roles. The induction process will help to build the skills and capacity of Members to contribute to corporate priorities.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- Member Development Strategy (2013-16)
- Member induction programme (2012)
- Discussions with members elected in 2011 and 2012
- Report to MDTP (10th Sept 2012) Evaluation of New Member Induction Programme 2012

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