

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1. Meeting:	MEMBER DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING PANEL
2. Date:	17th March 2014
3. Title:	Member Development Activity - Update (March 2014)
4. Directorate:	Resources

5. Summary

This report provides an update on progress in respect of Member Development activity.

6. Recommendations

That Members:

- a. Note the report and its content**
- b. Comment on the suggested programme.**

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 (PDP) process.

As agreed by MDTP at its meeting of 15 April 2013, a phased approach has been taken to scheduling PDPs with priority being given to members with specific responsibilities and members elected since 2012. This process is underway with approximately 75% of the first 'cohort' (26 out of 39) completed. The issues identified to date are summarised in paragraph 7.3.

Work has commenced to organise the remaining PDPs. Following the elections, new members and members with new responsibilities will be prioritised. Further updates on the issues raised in PDPs will be brought to the Panel for its consideration.

7.2 Autumn/Winter Programme September 2013- March 2014

As agreed by the Panel previously, pending the outcomes of PDPs, a limited programme was organised over this period.

These sessions included:

- Welfare Reform- update
- Corporate Parenting
- Questioning skills (delivered by the Parliamentary Outreach Project)

In addition to these sessions, regular Member Seminars have been delivered on Council priorities or emerging issues. Regular bulletins on national legislative and policy developments are also available to all Members via the LGiU. There are extensive e-learning resources, although there appears to be little take-up of this facility available via the learning and development site.

As a result of a number of members identifying areas for further skills development in their PDPs, two sessions have been organised in March:

- Chairing skills
- Questioning skills

These have been advertised and targeted at Members who have raised this in their PDP.

7.3 Spring/Summer Programme 2014

Issues arising from the current round of PDPs raised some individual support needs (for example around casework) to more generic requests for skills or knowledge development. Individual support needs are dealt with internally as far

as possible. If additional input is needed that requires funding, these will be referred to the Panel or Deputy Leader for approval.

The generic requests include:

- Handling the media
- Speaking with confidence at meetings
- Emergency Planning
- Social media practical skill session
- Dealing with difficult situations
- Mediation between different groups or individuals
- Insight into Parliamentary Select Committees

Where possible, these sessions will be delivered in conjunction with the wider induction programme for new Members from June 2014 onwards (see accompanying report).

Although not identified as a specific development need by Members in the current round of PDPs, a number of Members have raised the changing role of Councils and how this will impact on their role as ward members. Councillors must act on a number of levels: from the strategic and long-term to the immediate and very localised. Given the changes in local government responsibilities, the transformation of public services with accompanying reductions in resources and shifting citizen expectations, it is important that we equip members with the skills and knowledge to undertake their role confidently and effectively. Members' views are sought on how this issue should be addressed and how this can be supported through Member Development?

7.4 Members' learning and development intranet pages

Extensive work has taken place to develop these pages and migrate them to the new intranet. The site also includes links to other relevant documents such as the Members Handbook, training calendar and links to useful website such as MORE (see below).

The site is fully accessible on the Council's intranet which can be accessed by Members on their Council laptops (when logged in) or via the GOOD app.

Other resources have been developed including the Member Online Resource Environment, (M.O.R.E) website. This is a resource listing events, news, information and development opportunities as well as a space to network and share ideas and good practice with other members in the Yorkshire and Humber Region.

7.5 Regional and sub-regional working

Officers are part of strong Member Development Officer Network in South Yorkshire and across the wider Yorkshire and Humber region. Through this network we are able to share good practice, resources and knowledge with other authorities to maximise value for money.

Discussions are also underway at a sub-regional level to utilize the training expertise of LGiU to deliver sessions locally. In addition, we will publicise any free national and regional events arranged through Local Government Yorkshire and Humber and the Local Government Association. Details will be shared with Members on an 'as and when' basis. These courses provide a value for money option as travel and joining costs are kept to a minimum.

7.6 Externally provided learning and development opportunities

As with previous years, every effort will be made to support Members in their leadership roles by meeting their specific training needs (for example Leadership Academy or other bespoke programmes).

The previous Leadership Academy 'offer' included a number of free programmes and several which are heavily subsidised (for example the Young Councillor weekends.) Decisions to support attendance at Leadership Academy (or external training) are based on identified need or issues arising from PDPs, in liaison with this Panel or the Deputy Leader.

Members will recall that they agreed a set of Training Support Principles at the meeting of MTDP of 17 December 2012; which are as follows:

- The development need should have been identified previously in a Members PDP **OR** be in an area that is subject to continuous change which the Member needs to be kept up to date in
- Priority will be given to sub-regional and regional provision. Attendance at events beyond the region will only be approved if there is no similar local provision possible
- Attendance of more than one Member will not normally be approved, as Members will 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 cannot be achieved by other no (or lower) cost means
- The event/session/programme should include a high proportion of actual learning.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Member Development Strategy (2013-16)
Personal Development Interviews

Contact:

Caroline Webb, Senior Adviser (Scrutiny and Member Development) (01709) 822765: caroline.webb@rotherham.gov.uk