

## ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

<b>1. Meeting:</b>	<b>MEMBER DEVELOPMENT &amp; TRAINING PANEL</b>
<b>2. Date:</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> September 2014</b>
<b>3. Title:</b>	<b>Member Development: Summary of Activity 2013-14</b>
<b>4. Directorate:</b>	<b>Resources</b>

### **5. Summary**

This report provides an update on activity in respect of Member Development over the 2013-14 municipal year.

### **6. Recommendations**

#### **That Members:**

- a. Note the report and its contents;**
- b. Agree to undertake a self-assessment of the Member Development function;**
- c. Use the findings of the self-assessment to inform the future delivery of Members skills/knowledge requirements**

## **7. Proposals and Details**

### **Summary of activities 2013-14**

This report gives an overview of activity over the 2013-14 Municipal Year. Member development is overseen by the Member Development and Training Panel, chaired by the Deputy Leader.

The programme was based on local priorities as identified in the Council's corporate plan and Members individual skills and development needs identified in the personal development planning process.

The programme has incorporated 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 was intended to suit the needs of different learners, as well as make learning more accessible to Members.

The report also details other developments such as regional/sub-regional working; development of the Member's learning and development site along with the Skills Profile and Learning Resource Guide.

### **7.1 Member Development Strategy (2013-16)**

The Member Development Strategy was refreshed to reflect the current priorities of the Council and changing government agendas. In particular, the revised priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan have been included. The core programme has been updated to reflect the various roles of Members and the challenges presented in terms of Member skills and knowledge and as set out in the Member Skills Profile. All Member development activity is informed by the principles outlined in this strategy.

### **7.2 Personal Development Plans (PDPs)**

As agreed by the MDTP, a phased approach has been taken to scheduling PDPs, with priority being given to members with specific responsibilities and members elected since 2012. During the year approximately 75% of the first 'cohort' (26 out of 39) was completed.

Issues arising from PDPs included some individual support needs (for example around casework) to more generic requests for skills or knowledge development. These have been built into the 2014-15 work programme. Individual support needs are dealt with in-house as far as possible although where this cannot be addressed internally (for example, where a Member has taken on additional or new responsibilities), external provision may be sought.

### **7.3 Member Development Programme**

A generic programme of activity was developed, covering core responsibilities such as Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting, along with sessions designed to raise awareness of the impact of policy changes on the Council and local communities.

- Emergency planning
- Equality duty
- Countering child sexual exploitation
- Corporate parenting
- Media awareness
- Local government finance
- Social media
- Welfare reform

Three sessions were organised using external facilitation

- Chairing Skills
- Questioning Skills for Scrutiny (through the Parliamentary Outreach Service)
- Questioning Skills

A significant number of sessions were organised around the issue of countering child sexual exploitation, with sixty out of a possible sixty-three Members attending. The training was delivered jointly by South Yorkshire Police and a officers from Children and Young People's Services.

Attendance at sessions has been on-the-whole good, however on occasions in-house sessions have gone ahead with very low numbers after members who have committed to attend, did not turned up. This has an impact on the quality of the session as it limits the discussion. It is also not a viable use of officer time.

11 sessions were organised through the year. Total attendance = 124 (in addition 6 members were from other authorities)

#### 7.4 **Evaluation**

All sessions are evaluated after delivery, although inevitably not all participants complete or return evaluation sheets. However, a good proportion have been returned and therefore, a judgement can be made about how the training has been received.

The evaluation asks for information on the following areas:

- Useful Areas:
- Session length
- Describe to colleague
- Improvement to Knowledge (1 = little, 5 = lot)
- How they will use the knowledge
- Additional areas to include for future session

All participants found areas of the training useful. Several of the sessions had skills practice or role-play built into the sessions and where these were offered, participants responded favourably.

As a result of previous feedback from Members, most sessions are planned to last no more than two hours; although externally provided sessions are often a half-day in order to maximise learning and value for money. The timing of sessions have also changed following the evaluation of the 2012 induction programme which 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 programs (subject to the availability of venue/facilitators).

Many of the participants responded enthusiastically to the question “how would you describe this session to a colleague?” A sample of responses is reflected below:

Corporate parenting	<i>Valuable/essential/interesting</i>
Chairing Skills	<i>Enlightening/informative/thought provoking All chairs should attend this training</i>
Questioning Skills	<i>Informative, reflective and helpful Thinking more before asking questions</i>
Welfare reform	<i>Very good, thought provoking</i>
Social media	<i>Very useful, worth attending.. a must do</i>
Equality duty	<i>Great, good to refresh and update</i>
Emergency planning	<i>Really interesting and informative</i>
Local Govt Finance	<i>Very useful to understand a complex item</i>
Media Awareness	<i>Helpful and useful</i>

The sessions have been well received with very positive feedback. The majority of replies indicate that, through the sessions, knowledge and skills have improved a lot. Other replies indicate that existing knowledge has been consolidated and the sessions have been useful in terms of updating current knowledge.

As highlighted in last year’s report, although the evaluation asks how the Member will put the learning into practice, there has been little formal evaluation of how whether it has had an impact. As the next round of PDPs is being scheduled, it is intended to ask members to reflect on any development opportunities to see if it has made a difference to their role, knowledge base or skills.

## 7.5 ICT training

An HR Officer with specific responsibility for learning and development continues to deliver one-to-one sessions with a number of members to familiarise them with e-casework and other ICT systems. Feedback on her input has been very positive although it is clear that there is an ongoing need to provide support in these areas, particularly as more members are using e-casework to submit surgery requests.

Although it was planned to provide bespoke support to ensure that members are confident accessing e-learning modules, there has been little demand for these packages. This may possibly be because Members are unaware of e-learning options. It is intended to promote these options through the PDP process.

All Members have been offered the use of iPads and 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. Further support has been provided by Democratic Services officers particularly in relation to Members accessing the GoodApp and the Mod.Gov system.

## **7.6 Planning and Licensing**

In addition to the sessions organised through the central Member Development function, both Planning and Licensing officers have scheduled regular in-depth training and briefing on changes to policy or legislation for Members on the Licensing and Planning Committees. This activity is not captured in this report.

## **7.7 Leadership**

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). As greater expense is usually attached to these courses, we have maximised attendance at the LGA's Leadership Academy through its free places scheme.

One member attended the Leadership Academy Adults Social Care programme and one member attended the Children's Illimani programme

The learning and wider benefits to the organisation will be analysed through the personal development programme.

## **7.8 Regional and sub-regional working**

The Member Development Officer Network in South Yorkshire still meets regularly. Through this we are able to share good practice and knowledge with other authorities, and to maximise value for money, share resources wherever appropriate. For examples places have were offered to other South Yorkshire Councils on externally delivered courses.

Unfortunately because of staffing and resource reductions, the wider regional network, supported by Local Government Yorkshire the Humber (LGYH) no longer meets as frequently. Despite these difficulties, there is still a commitment to the development and maintenance of shared, sustainable resources which can be used and adapted by each Council; albeit on a reduced footing. Many of these resources are available via the Learning and Development intranet page.

## **7.9 Seminars**

The Seminar programme is an important part of development programme. The contents of seminars are suggested by Members and are usually chaired by the relevant Cabinet Member. As can be shown below, a wide range of issues have been covered over the previous 12 months. Records of attendance are kept by Democratic Services, although the seminars are usually scheduled immediately preceding or following major meetings to maximise participation.

- South Yorkshire Probationary Trust
- High Speed Railway HS2 - "Engine for Growth"
- Vulnerable Persons Unit
- The Local Authority's responsibilities in relation to Public Health
- Dementia Friendly Communities
- Comprehensive Spending Review
- Alzheimer's Society
- Rotherham Integrated Youth Support Service
- South Yorkshire Fire Authority
- Rotherham Voluntary Bus Partnership
- High Speed Railway HS2 - "Engine for Growth"
- The Council's Website
- Proposed Housing Allocation Policy changes
- Strategic Commissioning for Children and Young People's Services
- The New UK Voter Registration System and how Individual Electoral Registration will Impact on Rotherham
- Projects to address the impact of welfare reform on Rotherham residents
- Budget 2014/15
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment - update
- Rotherham Better Care Fund
- Information Technology available for Elected Members
- Welfare Reform: the experience of a housing association in a universal credit pathfinder area

#### 7.10 **Members' learning and development intranet pages**

During the year, extensive work has taken place to develop the pages and migrate 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.

#### 7.11 **Induction**

As 2013 had no local elections, an induction programme was not required. However, MDTP commented on the content and planning of the programme prior to the 2014 elections.

Consideration was given to a report presented by Tracey Parkin, Human Resources Manager, which detailed how the Council re-achieved the Charter for Member Development in February, 2011 and would be due for re-assessment in February, 2014. Changes at Local Government Yorkshire and Humber now meant that any future assessments would be managed by North East Employers.

#### **7.12 Member Development Charter**

MDTP took a decision not to seek reassessment for its Charter status in June 2013 (due for renewal in February 2014).

It was felt that as the Charter framework could be used as a self-assessment tool, without external accreditation. It was felt that the benefits from the Charter were now embedded in member development processes and did not feel it worthwhile, both in cost and Member/Officer time, to pursue re-assessment. As an alternative, a review group of officers and Members could carry out a self-assessment against the framework to identify any areas for improvement. Members are asked if they wish to undertake a self-assessment of Member development with a view to reporting their findings to a future MTDP.

### **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.

In order to balance competing needs and make best use of the budget, MTDP agreed some guiding principles for the approval of individual training requests which incur a cost (either course cost or travelling):

- 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
- 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.

The application of these principles will be taken through the PDP process. This will ensure that a consistent approach is taken to training requests.

### **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.

The Member Development function is supported by officers based in Scrutiny Services, with support from HR and Member's Secretariat. Although it is a small team of officers working across different sections, it has worked effectively to organise and administer an ambitious programme. However, it has limited capacity to respond to additional pressures. Should these occur, the programme or activities may need to be changed accordingly.

## **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  
Member Development Programme:  
Member Development and Training Panel Minutes

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