



Standards Committee
17th January 2007

**Report from the Mayor's Office and
Member Development Manager**

For Information

Wards Affected:
NONE

Annual Review of the Member Development Programme 2005/06

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to review the 2005/06 Member Development Programme. The report summarises feedback from members and gives information on events held, attendance, cost of the programme, achievements throughout 2005/06 and issues for forthcoming phases of the programme.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note this report.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Events

The local elections took place in May 2006 and this had a notable effect on rolling out the 2005/06 Member Development Programme, particularly in the latter part of the municipal year. Member attendance at training events and engagement in the development process were clearly limited in 2005/06 compared to previous years as a number of scheduled training events were subsequently cancelled. It is important to note however that the programme had been running successfully for three years prior to the election year and as a result a significant number of training needs had already been successfully addressed.

During 2005/06 a number of events were held over the course of the year. These continued to be themed around three areas (personal skills, technical skills and role development) and reflected issues which were raised during the personal development interviews that were conducted in 2003 and 2004. The types of sessions organised in 2005/06 continued to be informed by member preferences. Nine events were held over the course of the year, as detailed at paragraph 3.3. Due to the problems associated with timetabling and engaging members in the run up to the election, seven events were cancelled throughout the year.

Time constraints were a significant issue for members in 2005/06 as a result of the general election in May 2005, by-elections in June 2005 and the lead up to the local elections 2006. Consequently, as previously anticipated a limited number of events were scheduled, particularly after January 2006. A list of planned events for 2005/06 can be found in paragraph 3.11, highlighting those that took place or were cancelled. It is important to note that early in 2006, the focus was on developing effective induction arrangements following the local elections as the induction programme needed to cater for both newly elected and re-elected councillors.

3.2 Attendance

Unfortunately there is limited information regarding the training sessions that were held in 2005/06 and no data confirming the number of attendees at each training session. In previous years, member attendance declined from 3.2 to 2.5 sessions per councillor over the course of the municipal year. Given the build up to the local elections in May 2006, it is most likely that attendance in 2005/06 had declined further and that the target for all councillors of attending a minimum of five training events per year, as set out in the National Charter on Member Development, was not achieved.

3.3 Key figures

	2005/06	2004/05	2003/4
Number of events held	9	13	19
Total amount of places provided	Unknown	149	205
Average attendance per event (which were open to all councillors)	Unknown	13	12
Average attendance per councillor	Unknown	2.5	3.25
Number of councillors who did not participate in any event	Unknown	14	11
Number of councillors who			

attended 5 or more events	Unknown	11	18
Number of councillors who attended 3 or more events	Unknown	25	40

3.4 Cost

The cost of the programme in 2005/06 was £16,619. The cost of events ranged from the most expensive such as the Backbench Councillor Conference (approximately £4,000 including venue hire and speakers fees) and the Leadership Academy (£1,250 per person for six days), to those provided by staff from Brent or other local authorities which had no cost to the Member Development Budget. The budget was also used to fund individual member attendance at externally hosted conferences and seminars. The budget also funded some research and development work for the Members' E-Learning package.

It is important to note that the cost of training providers varies significantly and is dependent on how many people attend a session; whether training is held internally for a group of councillors or if the session takes place externally for a single or smaller number of delegates. The associated costs of organising internal training, such as venue hire and catering also have to be taken into consideration.

3.5 Personal Development Plan (PDP) interviews

The last round of Personal Development Plan (PDP) interviews were carried out in early 2004 and were followed by a review in 2005 which indicated that a number of issues were still outstanding and had not been addressed by the programme. Consequently, it was decided that PDP interviews would not be held during 2005/06 but would be organised following the elections in May 2006.

Since May 2006, all members of the Council have been invited to attend a Personal Development Plan interview and to date 45 individual learning and development plans have been compiled. Following discussions at the Member Development Network in December 2006, this should be noted as an achievement given that a substantial number of other London authorities have not yet commenced the PDP process.

3.6 Evaluation of events

In 2005/06, members were asked to fill out evaluation forms at the end of each training session. The objectives of these evaluation forms were to give members an opportunity to input into and improve the programme and subsequent events. The feedback received from these forms, informal feedback directly to the Member Development Manager and feedback gathered during the course of the personal development interviews 2004 was fed into the 2005/06 programme. This example of good practice continues today.

Particularly well received events were:

“Empowerment through Dialogue: The Heimler-Chelms Technique” (July 2005)

This provided members with a follow up training session to an earlier session in May 2005 on how to communicate more effectively. Fifteen councillors attended this session from across the political groups and feedback was very positive. Participants commented specifically on having “learnt the value of dialogue and listening,” benefiting from greater awareness of communication skills and the relevance to Council work, the impact of the techniques on being a more effective councillor and greater awareness about the need to listen to others.

Resident’s Satisfaction Briefing (September 2005)

This provided members with the chance to find out more about the role of councillors in addressing residents’ satisfaction and highlighted good practice examples of how councillors can improve communications with residents. Members indicated that they had benefited from learning about the specific role that councillors can play in improving communications with residents.

Backbench Councillor Conference (December 2005)

This conference was organised by Brent for members of the West London Alliance (WLA) and covered issues particularly relevant to backbench councillors including the new political arrangements; the effective use of Overview and Scrutiny; and the role of the Executive and the Political Groups in engaging backbench councillors in decision making. Approximately 50 delegates attended this event, including a representative from the IDeA, officers from authorities across the West London Alliance (WLA) and the UK, and key speakers from the Political Skills Forum and local authorities such as Wandsworth, Tower Hamlets and Liverpool.

3.7 Achievements

- There is on-going recognition of the programme as a good example compared to other London-wide authorities.
- Between 2005/06, a further three members graduated from the Leadership Academy, the highly acclaimed advanced Leadership programme run by the Improvement and Development Agency.
- IT access has improved substantially over the past 2 years. 59 members now have access to IT equipment and have received some degree of one-to-one training. In addition, a number of members have to date achieved European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) accreditation.

3.8 Cross-party working group

A small number of meetings of the cross-party working group were held in 2005/06 to review the Member Development Programme and consider issues for future inclusion. The meetings were attended by two out of the three

groups. This working group was intended to reflect that fact that member development is for all members of all political groups and that members should be as involved as much as possible in planning their own training. With these issues in mind, an approach was made to each of the political groups in June 2006 inviting group representatives to meet as an informal working group to discuss Member Development issues during and beyond the 2006/07 period. To date no cross-party discussions have taken place.

3.9 Other Issues

In addition to the in-house training sessions arranged for members, throughout 2005/06 a small number of councillors attended the following conferences/seminars as part of their individual learning and development objectives:- “Tackling Domestic Violence Against Women” one-day conference; CLARCC – Conference on Local Authority Response to Climate Change; and IDeA Leadership Academy Programmes.

Corporate E-learning was launched in January 2006 after some delays and this has provided all staff and councillors with greater opportunities for learning and development. Thirteen members attended an E-Learning briefing in June 2006 on how to access and benefit from the Corporate E-Learning modules. To date only a small number of councillors have accessed the modules. It is hoped however that with the launch of a Councillor E-Learning Package in February 2007, which has been developed in conjunction with the Dialogue Company, members will be more experimental with this learning tool. Similar to the existing corporate modules, the package will provide the opportunity for members to undertake training at times that are convenient to them and on topics that are specifically relevant to their role as a councillor.

3.10 Conclusion

As can be seen from the key figures, in comparison to previous years, fewer events were held in 2005/06 and it is assumed that attendance at training and development events had declined. Feedback from some of the scheduled events however demonstrates that the quality of training sessions remained high in 2005/06 and that members benefited from the sessions.

3.11 Programme of events between May 2005 and May 2006

24/05/05	Improving Dialogue
21/06/05	Presentation skills
12/07/05	Training on councillor web pages on BRAIN community website
18/07/05	E-Government Briefing
13/09/05	Improving Resident Satisfaction briefing
20/09/05	Improving Dialogue (part 2)

- 20/10/05 Risk Management and Financial systems - *did not take place*
- 7/11/05 'Choosing Health' in Brent seminar – *did not take place*
- 5/12/05 Backbench members – making a difference
- 17/01/06 Outside bodies – responsibilities of members
- 26/01/06 Visit to London Assembly Standards Committee

Domestic Violence briefing – *did not take place*
 Conservative Group session – *did not take place*
 Media training - *did not take place*
 Chairing meetings - *did not take place*
 Presentation skills - *did not take place*

3.12 Future issues to be addressed in 2006/07

To date members have participated in the following training events which have taken place both internally and externally:-

Date of event	Internal training events	Date of event	External training events
August 2006	Media Awareness for Executive Members (Part 1)	September 2006	IDeA Introduction to Leadership Conference (Lib Dem)
October 2006	Budget Scrutiny Panel Training	October 2006 – January 2007	IDeA Leadership Academy (Programme 63)
November 2006	Overview and Scrutiny Briefing	November 2006 – January 2007	IDeA BME Councillor Leadership Academy
November 2006	Understanding Housing & Locata Briefing	October 2006 - December 2006	IDeA Leadership Mentoring
November 2006	Media Awareness for Executive Members (Part 2)	October 2006	IDeA Leadership Academy -Scrutiny Chair Training
January 2007	Planning Awareness	November 2006	National Mentoring Programme Briefing
January 2007	Chairing Skills for ACF/SUCF Chairs and New Councillors	November 2006	LGiU Briefing – “Now you’re a councillor ... what you should know.”
February 2007 (Proposed)	Alcohol & Entertainment Licensing – Introduction to the Gambling Act	November 2006	Integrated Transport Conference & Exhibition 2006

February 2007 (Proposed)	Members' IT Session – one-to-one help & advice drop-in session	December 2006	LGiU Good Practice Seminar – “Dealing with casework effectively.”
March 2007 (Proposed)	Members' E-Learning Package - Launch	January 2007 – May 2007 (Proposed)	Leadership Skills - Mentoring for the Executive (Phase 2)
March 2007 (Proposed)	Health Scrutiny Briefing		
April 2007 (Proposed)	Equalities Awareness		

Arising from the PDP process it has become clear that there are varying levels of IT literacy amongst members with requests for training ranging from the provision of basic IT knowledge and skills to requests for more advanced skills and clarification about how to use IT systems to maximum effect. This year, there appears to be limited external training opportunities for members in this field and as a result we will be focussing more on internal training opportunities with the help of officers in ITU and Democratic Services. In most instances, 121 training sessions have already been provided to members but these may have to be extended wherever necessary. An IT drop-in session has been provisionally scheduled to take place in February 2007 to further assess and, where possible, assist members with their IT needs.

As in the past, training on the councillor web pages on the BRAIN community website has been offered to all members by the Member Development Manager and Democratic Services. Since May 2006, sixteen councillors have been trained and at least half of these regularly update their pages.

With regards to the 2006/07 Member Development Programme, the early part of the municipal year focussed on rolling out an effective and interesting induction programme for both re-elected and newly elected councillors, of which there were twenty-seven. The high intake of newly elected councillors in May 2006 and the creation of a new joint administration have generated a number of challenges for the Member Development Programme and as a result, there is a wide range of training and development needs that need to be addressed. Following a successful induction programme between May and June 2006, when 6 sessions were held for all members to familiarise themselves with Council-wide issues and processes, the focus shifted to completing as many Personal Development Plan interviews as possible. We have done well to complete 45 interviews to date as a significant number of London-wide authorities have not yet commenced the PDP process.

For the remainder of 2006/07 the Member Development Programme will continue to focus on addressing immediate training priorities such as chairing skills, IT skills, committee specific training needs, service-area awareness raising and leadership skills. A range of sessions have already taken place and future sessions will be scheduled until May 2007 to address those needs identified during the PDP interviews. Requests by members to attend specific external training events are always taken into consideration and addressed by

the programme, subject to training needs and budget availability. It is hoped that cross party discussions will take place in the forthcoming months to enable consideration of the longer term objectives of the Member Development Programme beyond 2006/07 and to ensure that any future programme adequately addresses members' learning and development needs. Members will be asked to consider and comment on future development opportunities including participation in BTEC National Diploma courses on Local Government and councillor mentoring.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 None

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 None

6.0 Diversity Implications

6.1 None

6.2 Background Papers

None

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