

	<p style="text-align: center;">Standards Committee 25 March 2009</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Report from the Mayor's Office and Member Development Manager</p>
<p>For Information Wards Affected: NONE</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Annual Review of the Member Development Programme May 2008 – April 2009</p>	

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to review the Member Development Programme. The report outlines the activities undertaken by members since May 2008, the feedback from members, and identifies constraints on the programme. Consideration is given to future development of the programme and to additional training opportunities for members which have arisen as a result of new legislation, such as the 'Councillor Call for Action'.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note this report

3.0 Detail

3.1 Activities and achievements since April 2008

Main programme

Since May 2008 events have been developed for the programme as a result of the issues raised in previous personal development plans (PDP) and during discussions with senior managers. The programme also took into account three original themes (personal skills, technical skills and role development), first identified at the outset of the programme in 2003.

Events that have been held from May 2008 to March 2009 include:

- Advanced Chairing Skills - 21 May 2008;
- Housing training - 25 June 2008;
- I.T. training - 3 July 2008;
- Planning training - 10 July 2008;
- Developing Scrutiny in Brent - 21 July 2008;
- Community Safety briefing - 3 November 2008;
- Tackling local issues in your area - 25 November 2008;
- Members' Questioning Skills – 23 March 2009.

A further event, on the change from the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) process to the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) process, will provide members with a briefing and an opportunity for questions. It is scheduled to take place on 20th April 2009. Feedback from this event will be included in next year's review of the programme.

Other activities during the past year

It should be noted that the previous year's review identified an increase in requests for attendance at external events since May 2006 and this trend has continued since May 2008. To date most requests, provided it can be shown that they meet personal development needs (usually in line with an area of particular responsibility such as chair of a committee) have been granted. External events which can be linked to the Corporate Strategy have also proven useful to members. However, increasing budgetary constraints mean that it is likely not all future requests can be accommodated. Some external events such as the Leadership Academy carry considerable cost (£1,250 per person for six days). A protocol regarding attendance at external events is currently being prepared and will be made available to members in the coming months.

Other member development activity has included mentoring/peer support. Some executive members have collectively participated in mentoring, and additional individual mentoring has been provided to other lead members.

Feedback from members

Largely positive feedback has been received from members on events attended during the past year. This has included the view that group training events benefit long-standing members of the council as well as newer members. Members are invited to provide feedback after every event they attend and have the opportunity to reflect on past events during their personal development plan interviews.

3.2 Constraints

Time constraints of councillors

A number of dates were identified in the Council's official calendar of meetings for member development, but time constraints remain a problem for members.

In terms of time available for member development sessions, there was approximately one date per month dedicated to this activity during the past year, with some dates cancelled due a vacancy in the Member Development office for a period of four months. Each session, which takes place in the evening, lasts between two and three hours and includes time for members to ask questions. It is possible to schedule development sessions during the day, but this is not recommended as it would have the effect of placing members in full time employment at a disadvantage as it is likely that they would be unable to attend.

Elections

Historically there has been a significant drop in member development activity in the run up to elections. This happened with the general election in May 2005, by-elections in June 2005, the local elections in 2006, by-elections in 2007 and the lead up to the GLA elections in June 2008. In light of the local elections scheduled for May 2010, it should be noted that there were no member development events from January 2006 until after the May 2006 local elections as a result of members' political commitments during this period. This is a pattern which is likely to be repeated in the future and, consequently, detailed consideration will be given to the viability of scheduling activities during January 2010 – May 2010.

Political support

A cross-party working group was, in previous years, assembled to discuss member development issues on an ad-hoc basis. This ceased to meet, however, following the 2006 local elections. A strong political lead on member development from all groups is required if future attendance and participation in the programme is to improve.

3.3 Next steps

Structured programme

The programme will continue to provide a carefully planned agenda based on the needs identified in personal development interviews and on other organisational and legislative issues that arise. Most of the work since May 2008 has concentrated on skills and knowledge, although additional work was conducted to develop the roles of opposition, non-executive, and members involved in overview and

scrutiny. Future work will include the opportunity for members to be supported in their roles as community champions, which has received recent attention under new legislation - the 'Councillor Call for Action' (CCfA). This is being addressed on a practical level by the roll out of neighbourhood working. Guidance issued by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) will help ensure that the programme's events support councillors to use the CCfA to its maximum possible effect in the context of existing neighbourhood working arrangements.

It is proposed that some future events include:

- Development of further communication skills for councillors;
- A session on public speaking;
- Sessions on support for neighbourhood working including consideration of the complaints process, the call-in process and petitions;
- Further service area briefings including planning, finance and housing;
- Committee-specific training to allow members to build up areas of specialised knowledge or expertise (eg. Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Planning Committee and Standards Committee).

Induction

Looking ahead to the local elections in May 2010, work in the period leading up to the elections will focus on induction arrangements. These will need to cater for both new and existing members. A formal induction programme will be drawn up during the coming year and is likely to consist of the following:

- A welcome reception where councillors will be given the opportunity to sign the declaration of acceptance of office, have their official photographs taken and received a briefing from the Borough Solicitor on the Members' Code of Conduct.
- An Induction day to take place shortly after the election, to include presentations from members of the Corporate Management Team and other senior officers. A members' handbook will be provided to all councillors at this event. This will be comprised of a short booklet explaining all the key information needed by councillors.
- Service specific induction sessions were held following the local elections in May 2006. They were well attended by councillors and positive feedback was received. Consequently it is planned that a similar style of briefing session will be held in 2010. The briefings will include information on the main service areas within the Council as well as specialised briefings on other areas of particular use during the induction period, for example members' IT.

Personal development plans

Personal development interviews are critical both in terms of identifying needs and in engaging members in the process of developing a programme. They were carried out following the local elections in May 2006 and were summarised in the previous review of the programme. There was a further opportunity for members who wished to update their interview, or to undertake the process for the first time if they had not previously participated, in November 2007. There is limited information available regarding the number of members who completed a personal development plan in 2007, but the most recent review of the programme indicated that there were some issues arising which had not been addressed by the programme to date. Consequently new member development interviews will not be carried out this year, to allow the next phase of the programme to address the remainder of the issues. The next set of member development interviews will be carried out following the local elections in May 2010. It should be noted however that any member who has not previously completed a personal development interview will be provided with an opportunity to do so before this date.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The costs of the member development programme are met from allocated budgets within the overall Communication and Diversity Unit. The cost of the member development programme is approximately £15,500 to date at this stage in the financial year. A required budget reduction in the form of a 3% saving means that this budget will be adversely affected during the next financial year. One impact of this is likely to be a reduction in the number of fee-charging external events, with a greater emphasis instead on internal training events.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 None.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 None.

For further information please contact:

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