



**Standards Committee
24 March 2010**

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

Wards affected:
NONE

**Annual Review of the Member Development
Programme May 2009 – April 2010**

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 2009, feedback from members, and identifies constraints on the programme. Consideration is given to future development of the programme, which includes an induction plan to be delivered after the local elections on 6 May 2010, and to additional training opportunities for members such as the e-learning package 'Modern Councillor'.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to note this report.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Activities and achievements since May 2009

Main programme

Events have been developed for the programme as a result of the issues raised in previous personal development plan (PDP) interviews, during discussions with senior managers and with input from the member development steering group. The programme has also taken into account three original themes (personal skills, technical skills and role development), first identified at the outset of the programme in 2003. A new round of PDP interviews will be offered to all members following the outcome of the local elections in May.

Events that have been held from April 2009 to March 2010 include:

- CAA Explained - 20 April 2009;
- Looking After Brent's Money - 6 May 2009;
- Place Survey - 22 June 2009;
- I.T. training (Lotus Notes – Outlook) - 27 July 2009 & 1 & 9 September 2009;
- Metropolitan police partnership training project - 22 October 2009;
- Safeguarding Adults - 19 November 2009;
- Metropolitan police partnership training project (session one) - 20 January 2010;

A second session on the Metropolitan police partnership training project was scheduled for 2 March but postponed due the police officers involved in the session being deployed for an operation at very short notice. The project will now recommence following the elections on 6 May 2010.

Other development activities during the past year

Reports in previous years identified an increase in requests for attendance at external events (first noted May 2006), a trend which continued during the first half of last year, although requests from members have reduced somewhat in recent months. A draft proposal, 'Guidance for member attendance at external events' was put to the member development steering group on 8 June 2009 and was agreed by members. This guidance was subsequently circulated to all councillors and is also available on the member development webpage. There were twenty requests by fourteen councillors to attend external courses during the period covered in this report. Three of these events were free, whilst the remaining seventeen were fee-charging. The average fee per course was approximately £317.00. Five members chose not to attend their external event after their booking had been confirmed and all five cancelled at short notice, requiring the member development budget to pay the fee in full. One course was cancelled by the event organisers at short notice, and we were offered a credit note or a full refund.

Member role descriptions, including one for every key committee position as well as a standalone 'all members' role description, were considered by the member development steering group on 8th June 2009. The role descriptions were subject to consultation from all members holding such positions and following the close of the consultation period, agreed by the member development steering group at their meeting on 20 October 2009. Members were notified of the agreed role descriptions, which have been published in full on the member development webpage.

Other member development activity has included mentoring and peer support. Some executive members have collectively participated in

mentoring, and additional individual mentoring has been provided to other lead members by external mentors. The feedback received from members who have participated in structured mentoring programmes has been overwhelmingly positive. Consequently, plans have been developed to extend an offer of internal mentoring to all new members following the local elections in May.

The member development webpage has been updated with links to training material delivered at sessions during the past year, feedback forms for events attended, guidance for attendance at external events, the opportunity to email suggestions for future training events and a link to the member role description page.

Feedback from members

Feedback is sought from members following every training event attended, both internal and external. The majority of feedback received after attendance at internal events during the past year has been very positive, for example enthusiastic appreciation has been shown of the development of interactive training sessions. Feedback has also included constructive proposals for future events, such as suggestions for using anonymised casework for training sessions on how to deal with vulnerable individuals. Significantly fewer members submitted feedback following their attendance at external events, although when such feedback is received, this too is largely positive.

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. The member development steering group at its most recent meeting on 17th February 2010 requested that all future training sessions be scheduled for Monday evenings wherever possible. This request has been duly noted by officers planning the Council's Calendar of Meetings 2010-2011.

In terms of time available for member development sessions, there was approximately one date per month dedicated to these events during the past year, with the exception of the August recess. 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, and several members have, this year, taken up existing briefings previously provided for officers only, on the issue of dealing with vulnerable adults. A greater overall reliance on day time sessions is not however 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 upcoming local elections scheduled to take place on 6th May 2010 and the reality of members' political commitments during this period, the member development steering group took the decision to suspend member development sessions from January – May 2010. Consequently there was a planned truncation of this year's programme.

Political support

The member development steering group (MDSG) has met on a quarterly basis during the timeframe covered in this report and has provided constructive input and evaluation consistently during this time. A strong political lead on member development from all groups is essential to ensure member ownership of the programme and to improve future attendance and participation in the programme, and in this respect input from the MDSG will continue to be extremely valuable.

3.3 Next steps

Structured programme

The programme will continue to provide carefully structured development opportunities on a rolling programme basis, and will be based on needs identified in PDP interviews which will take place after the May local elections. Other organisational and legislative issues that arise will also contribute to the training schedule. The majority of the training sessions since May 2009 have concentrated on skills and knowledge, although additional work has also been conducted to broaden member awareness of recent legislation such as the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) process. Future events will include the opportunity for members to be supported in their roles as community leaders, as well as additional work to develop the roles of opposition, non-Executive, and members involved in Overview and Scrutiny.

It is proposed that future events include:

Personal skills training:

- Chairing skills;
- Questioning skills,
- Communication skills;
- Equalities and Diversity.

Technical skills training:

- I.T. development;
- E-learning – introduction of a new e-learning package.

Role development:

- Sessions for Overview and Scrutiny members and non-Executive members;
- Sessions to support development of members as community leaders and in working closely with partner agencies;
- Committee-specific training to allow members to build up areas of specialised knowledge or expertise (to include but not limited to: Standards Committee, Planning Committee and Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing Committee).

Induction 2010

In addition to the above outline, a comprehensive induction programme will be delivered following the local elections in May 2010 and has been designed to cater for both new and existing members. The formal induction programme will consist of the following:

- *An evening welcome reception (Tuesday 11th May)* 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 (Sunday 16th May)* 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. The day will also include an outside speaker delivering an exploration of some of the main challenges facing local councillors over the next four years.
- *Service specific induction sessions (May-July)* were held following the local elections in May 2006. They were well attended by councillors and positive feedback was received. Consequently a series of evening briefings has been scheduled for delivery during May, June and early July 2010. The briefings will include information on the main service areas within the Council as well as specialised briefings on other areas relevant to members, such as neighbourhood working and partner agencies.

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 £13,100 at this stage in the financial year from a budget of £15,000. A potential intake of new members following the local elections is likely to result in an increased demand for training during the next financial year and consequently careful resource management will be necessary in order to ensure efficient use of funding.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 None.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 Officers believe that there are no specific diversity implications in this report.

For further information please contact:

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