



**Standards Committee
25 June 2012**

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

For Information

Wards Affected:
NONE

**Annual Review of the Member Development
Programme May 2011 – April 2012**

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to review the Member Development Programme. The report outlines the development sessions delivered for members since May 2011 including tailored role development sessions, technical skills development and personal skills development. An 18 month review of the programme's three year Charter accreditation is underway, conducted by South East Employers (SEE), the organisation now responsible for London boroughs' Charter accreditation. A verbal update on the review will be presented to members at the meeting.

This report also outlines some future plans for the programme, including a series of 'drop-in' sessions to help prepare members for the move to the Civic Centre, community engagement sessions including ward working projects and community safety, and an event looking at the 'councillors as school governor' role including the wider issue of probity in schools.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note this report.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Development events May 2011 – April 2012:

A number of member development events were held during the 2011-2012 municipal year. These have been delivered by a combination of external trainers, internal officers and partners:

- Transport for London (TfL) briefing – 16 June 2011;
- Complaints awareness training – 20 June 2011;
- Time management and coping with stress – 27 June 2011;
- Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing Committee training – 30 June 2011;
- Brent Placemaking Guide – 14 July 2011;
- Health and safety training 21 July 2011;
- Performance management training 25 July 2011;
- Outlook training – 13 and 26 September 2011;
- Conflict resolution training – 24 October 2011;
- Equalities training (Executive member) – 31 October 2011;
- Assessing policies and strategies – 10 November 2011;
- Equalities training (Labour Non-Executive member) – 15 November 2011;
- Charing Skills in Local Government – 24 November 2011;
- West London Waste Authority – 12 January 2012;
- Safeguarding Adults briefing – 30 January 2012;
- I.T. Microsoft Word basic training – 16 February 2012;
- Safeguarding children and corporate parenting – 26 March 2012;
- Equalities training (Liberal Democrat group) – 2 April 2012;
- Housing Benefit: changes to the system – 16 April 2012;
- Equalities training (Conservative group) – 24 April 2012.

Further scheduled sessions:

- 10 July 2012 – The Procurement Challenge
- June/July 2012 Civic Centre ‘drop-in’ sessions
- 31 July 2012 – Councillors as school governors: probity in schools.

3.2 Personal Development Plan reviews:

36 councillors took up the opportunity to have a personal development plan (PDP) interview in 2010. All PDP interviews were conducted by an external consultant who then produced individual personal development plans, agreed by each member who took part in the process. The process was kept confidential to allow members the opportunity to discuss any issues in confidence.

The following areas were identified as common areas of development.

- Public speaking/communication skills;
- Dealing with large amounts of paperwork/time management;
- Scrutiny (of council policy and performance);
- IT training;
- Charing skills;

It was also identified that there were potential benefits to shadowing officers from the council and other partner organisations to gain a greater understanding of work in a particular area, for example housing and planning.

These development needs were taken into account for the events which took place from May 2011 to April 2012 and will continue to be met through the rolling programme.

3.3 Attendance at external events May 2011 – April 2012:

The number of external events attended by members was 18, whilst the number of members attending external events was also 18. Several members attended more than one external event. Due to the current financial climate and the consequent financial constraints on the programme, the cost of external events remains a factor in determining whether it is appropriate for members to attend. Members have been encouraged to attend free external events or events which are at a minimal cost. The cost of only one external event during the past municipal year may be regarded as significant, and this was the Local Government Association (LGA) annual conference, an event which it was entirely appropriate for the Leader of the Council to attend.

At no time did members fail to attend courses on which they had been booked or cancel at short notice. There was one occasion when a councillor was unable to attend an event on which they had been booked; however this event was free and ample notice was also given to the organiser therefore there was no financial penalty.

3.4 Feedback from members regarding the member development programme:

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 largely positive, for example strong appreciation was shown of the training session which examined new legislation likely to impact housing benefit claimants. Feedback has also included constructive proposals for future events. Significantly fewer members submitted feedback following their attendance at external events, although when such feedback is received, this too has been largely positive.

3.5 Political support:

The member development steering group (MDSG) met on a quarterly basis during the past municipal year and has consistently provided constructive input and evaluation 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 steering group remains vital. Member development events are often well attended by experienced senior members (including members of the Executive) which demonstrates an excellent example to other members who may be less experienced in the councillor role.

The member development steering group combined with the ward working reference group during the previous municipal year (2010-2011) after members and officers agreed these two groups could be a more efficient tool when working as a single entity given the overlapping nature of the groups' agendas and membership. This arrangement has worked well and has been found to be an efficient use of member and officer time.

3.6 Constraints

Time constraints of councillors:

As has been identified in previous years, time constraints remain a problem for members. There are rarely more than one or two dates available each month for member development sessions, with the exception of the August recess during which time no sessions are held. In addition, during the past municipal year the GLA elections (held in May 2012) had a negative impact on member availability and consequently fewer member development sessions were held than anticipated at the outset of the year. 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 some of the Civic Centre 'drop-in' sessions will be scheduled during the daytime, but a greater overall reliance on day time sessions is not recommended given a number of members are fully employed and consequently would be unable to attend.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The costs of the member development programme are met from a budget of £15,072. A significant proportion of the events in the programme over the last year have been delivered internally by council officers, which has helped to keep the costs down.

The possibility of sharing training events and training providers with other boroughs has been considered and a meeting was held with counterparts in Harrow to discuss shared training opportunities. A training session arranged by Harrow officers designed to develop members' assertiveness skills was put forward as a joint opportunity; however it conflicted with a member development date already scheduled in Brent on the same evening and consequently Brent

members were not available to attend. The London Member Development Network (LMDN) was also contacted with a view to exploring joint commissioning of training providers. The LMDN has scheduled a meeting for 3 July when this issue will be discussed in further detail.

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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