

Annual Monitor of Member Training and Development

Summary

1. In January 2009 Council agreed to introduce a Member Development Policy, giving a commitment to monitor the take-up of development opportunities.
2. The 2009/2010 core programme of Training & Development for members has now come to a close and this report therefore informs members of the take up at events offered together with a summary of feedback received.

Background

3. The Council has put in place effective systems for recording the data it holds in respect of development activities offered to members and the Member Development Steering Group has undertaken to monitor this and report it's findings to the Standards Committee bi-annually. The Steering Group has given this commitment, under the Member Development Policy, approved by Council in December 2009.

Monitoring of Take-Up of Training & Development

4. As part of its commitment to monitoring take-up, in January of 2009 Council introduced an annual minimum requirement relating to the number of development activities Executive/Non Executive members should attend. Council agreed that Executive members should attend a minimum of 12 development sessions and Non-Executive Members a minimum of 8 sessions during the course of a year;

Analysing Take-Up

5. Take up of development opportunities varies according to the nature of the training. Generally, training events targeted at members of a particular committee, e.g. Scrutiny or Planning attract a higher level of attendees than events which focus on specific skills such as chairing meetings, dealing with the media etc.

6. Qualifying activities which count towards the agreed targets include
 - Any session or activity offered in the core programme
 - Relevant information briefings, presentations etc given by a Directorate or an external body
 - Approved conferences, seminars and external training events
 - Police and Fire Authority Training
 - Independent study which is relevant to the role of and elected member including, e-learning, DVD's CD's etc
 - Pre-Council Briefings
7. Details of Members' attendance levels at qualifying events and activities are held on a central database within Democratic Services and for the year 2009/2010 are summarised as follows:
 - 21 Non-Executive Members achieved the minimum target of 8 qualifying 'sessions' and 19 of those exceeded the target
 - 19 Non-Executive Members did not reach their target
 - 5 Executive Members exceeded the target of 12 qualifying 'sessions' however 2 Executive members did not achieve the minimum target.
 - 4 non Executive Members did not undertake any qualifying events or activities
8. The Member Development Steering Group takes a pro-active role in encouraging Group Members to work towards achieving the agreed targets.
9. This summary report setting out the results of take-up by Members and their performance in meeting the appropriate agreed targets for 2009/10 will be reported to Council at it's meeting in July.
10. Following Council it is the intention to publish the training attendance figures on the Council's web site alongside members allowances and expenses for the same period.
11. By April 2011, Democratic Services will be in a position to measure the success of introducing the targets by comparing the achievement in 2010/11 with those in 2009/2010

Evaluating the Core Programme (including in year additions)

12. In addition to the monitoring of take up at development events another key aspect to measuring the success and effectiveness of the development sessions on offer is measured through feedback received from attendees.

13. Details of feedback received between June 2009 and May 2010 relating to development activities included in the core programme are summarised in Annex A

[Please note: Annex A is not included for consideration by Council on 15 July 2010, because Council is only required to consider the annual monitor of 'take-up' of training activities]

Summary of Feedback

14. The session held on Local Government Finance was well received by members who found it enjoyable and aimed at the right level. The Steering Group agreed however not to run the session again until 2011/2012 when it would be offered as part of an induction programme following the elections.

15. The expected Revisions to the Code of Conduct did not materialise, however the Interim Head of Civic Legal and Democratic Services took the decision to run with the session as planned. The training focused instead on common issues raised in relation to the Code. Attendance was much higher than expected though predominantly Parish Councils. Feedback was very positive however delegates suggested that more 'practical examples could be incorporated into the session along with more time for discussion at the end. In response to the feedback and requests for similar training in the future, a further session has been included in the 2010/2011 programme with particular focus on Complaints Hearings and Conduct. The session will be delivered by the new Head of Civic Legal and the rules regarding pre-determination and bias.

16. The Theatre Work-Shop around Member/Officer relationships received the most positive feedback of all events offered to date. Although attendance figures were lower than expected, those who took part thought it an excellent way of engaging members and officers in a very delicate area. There was an equal mix of participation from officers and members with participants enjoying the interactive style and the opportunity to break down some of the barriers between members and officers in an informal setting. Feedback from the session also included suggestions for follow up sessions on Members rights to personal information on behalf of constituents and scale of enquiries (how much work is involved). As a result of feedback a session has been included in the 2010/2011 programme Members – 'Need to Know' which will guide members through the complexities of their working relationships with officers with particular focus on the Member/Officer protocol and members right to information.

17. In addition to feedback on the sessions themselves, a number of comments were also made relating to room temperature, quality of refreshments etc. These comments were taken on board when planning the 2010/2011 programme

Options

18. Members can:

- (i) make recommendations to Council on the level of take-up of development opportunities;
- (ii) make representations to the Member Development Steering Group on the quality and provision of the Core Programme 2009/2010

Corporate Priorities

19. Monitoring take up of development events and evaluating the core programme directly supports the Council's Corporate aim of providing of strong leadership, supporting and developing people and encouraging improvement in everything we do.

Implications

20. There are no known implications associated with the recommendations.

Risk Management

21. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy, there are no risks associated with the contents of this report other than if Standards Committee were not to refer this report on to Full Council, thus being in breach of the Terms of Reference for the Steering Group agreed by Full Council

Recommendation

22. Members are asked to comment on the contents of the report and in particular to make any recommendations to Full Council on the take-up of development opportunities offered in 2009/2010.

Reason

23. In order to comply with the monitoring arrangements set out in the Steering Group's Terms of Reference as approved by Council.

Contact Details

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Report Approved

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Specialist Implications Officer(s) none

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None.

Annexes:

None