
Member Development Steering Group

12 January 2010

Report of the Head of Civic Legal and Democratic Services

Review of Member Training and Development Budget

Summary

1. This report sets out the position to date regarding expenditure against the Member Training & Development budget and seeks Members views on increasing the available budget for 2010/11

Background

2. Member Training and Development is allocated an annual budget of £10K from which all costs associated with the annual programme as well as personal development reviews and requests to attend external training events/seminars are currently met.
3. Currently, all of the £10k from the 2009/10 budget is already committed and this steering group recently took the decision to freeze spending on ad-hoc additional training requests for the rest of the current financial year.
4. The restriction on spend means that any requests to attend training with an associated cost, other than training which has already been committed to as part of the core programme, will not be approved for the remaining budget period.

Member Development Budget

5. York has a relatively low budget set aside for development of it's elected members in comparison to other authorities in the region. The table below shows a comparison of local authority spend on Member Development of neighbouring authorities (*excluding staffing costs*):

Authority	Annual Budget	No of Cllrs	Av spend per head
Bradford	£30K	89	£337
Calderdale	£30K	51	£588
Hull	£30K	59	£508

Authority	Annual Budget	No of Cllrs	Av spend per head
Kirklees	£8K	69	£116
Wakefield	£22k**	63	£350
York	£10K	47	£212

** Includes conferences

6. There is increasing pressure on the current budget as we strive toward improving the development of our elected members whilst working towards the Charter. At present, basic provision of a core annual programme together with offering each member a Personal Development Review takes up the majority of the available budget. In addition, increasing requests from members to attend external conferences which are often held outside the region are becoming more and more frequent and it is not always possible to authorise these requests due to unavailability of funds.
7. Wherever possible development opportunities offered through York's core programme are delivered internally by our own skilled officers who are experts in their field. However, whilst it is recognised that our own officers provide a highly valued resource, the range of topics which they are able to officer is restrictive
8. More frequently it is becoming necessary to look beyond the skills of our own officers when sourcing training provision for elected members by using external providers This is particularly the case when delivering specific skills training such as:
 - Chairing Skills
 - Gambling & Licensing Training
 - Scrutiny Skills
 - Leadership Skills
 - Media Training
9. High quality external training provision comes at a cost. On average a full days training delivered by an external facilitator costs between £1200 and £2,500. Similarly, the delegate rate for attending external conferences and seminars has risen rapidly in recent years with a high proportion of these events being held in London.
10. A typical conference costing £375 for a single member to attend can cost an additional £200 once travel and/accommodation costs are added.
11. We currently offer 2 places each year on the highly recommended 'Leadership Academy' residential programme at a costs £1500 per delegate.

12. Whilst savings could be made by cutting back on the use of external trainers and perhaps restricting member attendance to regional conferences/seminars, it is possible that this could have a negative impact on the development of our elected members.
13. In theory, applying such restrictions could provide members with less opportunity to challenge and apply objectivity whilst learning from and networking with a wide range of other organisations and local authorities that attend such seminars and conferences.

Consultation

14. No consultation has taken place in relation to this report, it is largely for information only and the budget is managed directly by Democratic Services.

Options

16. the following options are available to Members:
 - a. To suggest to the Standards Committee that the Member Development Budget be increased
 - b. To impose a restriction on the use of external trainers and/or attendance at London based conferences and events in order to rationalise spending to the Member Development Budget
 - c. To keep the Member Development budget at it's current level of £10k

Corporate Priorities

17. Ensuring spend on this budget is managed carefully and constructively, contributes to the Council's ambitions to become an Effective Organisation.

Implications

18. There are no known implications associated with the contents of this report other than any financial implications arising from any future potential overspends.

Risk Management

19. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy, there are no risks associated with the contents of this report other than a failure to manage resources effectively by overspending on the Member Development Budget.

Recommendation

20. Members are asked to:

- (i) Comment on the contents of the report.
- (ii) Agree whether to make any restrictions to the use of the budget in terms of external training provision and/or conferences outside the regional.
- (iii) Invite Standards Committee to consider making a recommendation to the Executive and Council, as part of the budget setting process to increase the current Member Development Budget in light of the pursuit of Member Development Charter Status

Reason

- 21. In order to ensure the Council can deliver effective Member Development opportunities to members within the scope of the budget.
- 22. To comply with the requirements of the Charter which state that members are actively involved in setting the Member Development Budget and monitoring the level of spend.

Contact Details

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Specialist Implications Officer(s)

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None.