Member Development Steering Group   **12th October 2011**

Report of the Assistant Director Governance & ICT

Review of the Evaluation Process

Summary

1. At a meeting of the Member Development Steering Group held on 20 July 2011 it was agreed that the form currently used to evaluate training sessions be reviewed. This was to ensure that it enabled accurate and informative feedback to be obtained from attendees. It would also seem timely at this stage to review the whole process used for evaluating training sessions and not just the form itself.

2. This report asks Members to consider the style of any new evaluation form and the process for gathering information.

Background

3. After most training sessions attendees are asked to complete an evaluation form which currently asks Members to give comments on their overall impression and delivery of the training session. In addition to this Members are asked to rate the following from 1 to 5 (with 1 being the lowest rating and 5 the highest).

    - How well did the course meet your objectives?
    - Was the training aimed at the right level?
    - How did you rate the style and delivery of the session?
    - How did you rate the quality of the handouts?
    - How much did your overall knowledge of the topic covered increase?
    - Were there sufficient breaks during the session?
    - How do you rate the general organisation of the session?

4. Finally, Members are currently asked to identify which, if any, of the Council's strategic aims and objectives the training session supported.

5.   At the July meeting of the Member Development Steering Group (MDSG) Members asked for the current form to be reviewed. They expressed concerns regarding some of the contradictory ratings and comments reported in respect of several of the training sessions between 6th May and 14th July 2011. This led to doubts as to how useful and accurate the information currently gathered is and how effectively we analyse it. Members also identified the need to know how many people attended a course if reporting back on evaluation forms were to be expressed as a percentage.

6.   From the above comments it seemed opportune to not only review the evaluation form but the way the form was analysed and reported back to MDSG.

Potential Ways Forward

7.   In order to establish a way forward Members of the Steering Group are asked to consider the following questions:

   • What information do we want to collect?
   • Why do we want to collect it?
   • What we will do with the information once we have it?
   • How can the information be used to inform future training programmes?

8.   To help Members answer the above questions reference should be made to the questions on the current form to see which, if any of them would still be a useful question to ask. A copy of the current evaluation form is attached at Annex A to this report.

9.   To date, and for comparison, the officer has received evaluation forms from 3 other local authorities. Two of the forms are very similar to the one we use now and are predominantly set out in a 'tick box' format asking the attendee to rate different aspects of the training from 1 to 5. However both have more space for free hand comments and on one form, all 'tick box' questions also have a box for freehand comments. These forms are attached at Annexes B & C to this report.

10. There are several questions on the 2 forms mentioned above that do not currently appear on our form such as:

   • How could the session have been more useful to you?
   • What do you intend to do as a result of this training?

- If you had to pass on 3 key learning points to other Members what would they be?
- Who would you recommend attends this training?

11. The third evaluation form received from another local authority is quite different and takes the form of a target (Annex D refers). At this particular authority each session has its own tailored form with specific objectives relative to that individual training session. The information from this is then pulled into a short report. One month after the event, Members are asked to complete an online form (Annex E refers) to assess the impact of the training they have completed, information is again pulled into a short report. At this stage Members are asked the following:

- What aspect of your role was this event intended to support? (i.e. Ward Councillor, Committee Member, Committee Chair, Cabinet Member, Personal Development)
- Did this event improve your ability to carry out the above role?
- Have you been able to put into practice what you learned?
- Please describe any positive impact this training has had on the following? (You as an individual, The Council, the Community).
- There is also a box for any further freehand comments not covered by the questions above.

12. Any comments made that require follow up are pursued and regular reports are submitted to their equivalent of MDSG to keep the Committee informed.

13. In addition to considering the content of the form the Steering Group are asked their thoughts on how best to circulate the form the main options being:

- Paper handout directly after training session
- E-mail form shortly after training session

Consultation

14. This report acts as a consultation document to gauge the views of MDSG prior to bringing back a draft revised form to the next meeting of the Steering Group which will incorporate the comments made at today's meeting.

Options

15. There are no specific options associated with this report, however, Members of the Steering Group are asked to give their views on what style and format any new evaluation form should take, how the form should be circulated and how the information gathered should be evaluated.

Analysis

16. Firstly Members are asked to agree what information should be gathered (paragraph 7 & 8 refer) and how they wish to use this information. It is important that we ask the right questions in the first instance to ensure that the data we are collecting is meaningful. It is envisaged that information gathered would mainly be used to monitor take-up, keep track of attendees' views of training courses, identify what works and what doesn't work and inform the content of future training programmes. The Steering Group are asked to give clarity to any other potential uses for the information gathered they can identify.

17. A summary of information gathered will still be presented to the Steering Group on a regular basis in order that they can monitor both take-up and outcomes of training sessions.

18. The Steering Group are then asked to consider what they would like any new evaluation form to look like (paragraphs 9 to 12 refer). From the small amount of research done to date the 'tick box' style form seems the simplest and easiest to analyse. This style of form may limit the number of freehand comments received (even if room is left for these). It may however, be easier to consistently analyse a fixed set of questions, which are scored between 1 and 5, rather than trying to analyse many and varied freehand comments.

19. The 'target style' form (Annex D refers**)** is a very different approach to the current evaluation form used. Each 'target form' issued would need to be tailored to the individual training session (although some of the questions/objectives asked would remain the same for any session offered). This could lead to the Steering Group having a much clearer idea of the advantages and disadvantages of any particular training session/trainer. However it would be more resource intensive to administer as each form would need to be individually prepared. Analysis of the form would probably take the same amount of time as at present.

20. The Local Authority using the 'target style' form also use a follow up form as described in paragraph 11 of this report. This is accessed online, although it could also be sent via e-mail. Again, this is a very different approach to what we have previously used at City of York Council, and some Members may feel that it is overkill, having already completed an evaluation form at the time of the training session. However, it is possible that Members may have different views of a training course once they have had more time to reflect on it or once they have been able to put into practice what they have learned.

21. Sending out a follow up form after every session could be time-consuming and resource intensive for very little return or it could lead to positive results and assist in informing the content of future work programmes. Alternatively, Members may like to give consideration to a follow up form being sent out, quarterly, biannually or even annually. An annual form could list all the training courses an individual had attended that year and ask questions similar to those set out in the bullet points in paragraph 11 of this report. In addition a further question could be asked about what training sessions Members may like to see in future training and development programmes. However, if this were the case the timing of any annual evaluation form would need to be carefully considered in order that the timescales for putting a programme together could be met.

22. Members are asked to consider how the main evaluation form should be circulated, either in paper format directly after a training session or via e-mail the next day. There are pros and cons to both approaches. Handing out forms immediately after a training session may lead to more forms being returned, however unless the form is quick and easy to complete it is unlikely that all 'boxes' will be filled out. E-mailing forms could lead to more comprehensive responses, but it is unknown whether this would lead to an increase in the number of forms returned. With many of the training sessions the Democratic Services Team need to rely on officers in other Directorates to hand out the evaluation forms. If forms were distributed via e-mail the day after a training course the onus would be on the Democratic Services Team to distribute the form and chase for return.

23. In summary, and in order that a draft revised evaluation form can be presented back to them at the next MDSG meeting, Members are asked to

- Consider what information they would like to collect and why and identify some possible questions for the draft revised evaluation form

- Consider which style of form they prefer

- Consider how they would like the evaluation form to be distributed (as a hand-out after a training session or e-mailed the following day)

- Consider whether they would like to introduce a follow up form on a quarterly, bi-annual or annual basis

Corporate Strategy 2009/2012

24. This report is linked with the 'Effective Organisation' element of the Corporate Strategy 2009/2012 – 'we shall be a modern Council, with high standards in all we do, living up to our values and be a great place to work.

Implications

25. **Financial:** There are no financial implications associated with the recommendations within this report.

26. **Human Resources:** There are no Human Resources implications associated with the recommendations within this report.

27. **Legal:** There are no legal implications associated with the recommendations within this report.

28. There are no other implications associated with the recommendations within this report.

Risk Management

29. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy there are no risks associated with the recommendations set out within this report.

Recommendations

30. Members are asked to :

- Consider and comment upon this report

- Identify a suitable form style for the proposed new evaluation form and some key questions to be asked

- Consider how the form should be distributed

- Consider whether they would like to introduce a further evaluation form on a quarterly, biannual or annual basis

    Reason: To inform the content of a revised evaluation form and the process to be used to gather information.

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Specialist Implications Officer(s) None

Wards Affected: **All** [✔]

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Evaluation forms from other local authorities

Annexes
Annex A Current Evaluation Form
Annex B Example Evaluation Form (1)
Annex C Example Evaluation Form (2)
Annex D Example Evaluation Form (3)
Annex E Evaluation Form – 1 Month After Training