

Report of the Assistant Director: Governance & ICT

Evaluation Report on the Core Training Programme (15th July to 15th November 2011) and Next Steps in the Core Training Programme

Summary

1. This report informs Members of:
 - The take up at events offered to date
 - A summary of the feedback received
 - Analysis of the take-up
 - Next steps in the core programme

Background

2. The Council has put in place effective systems for recording the data it holds in respect of development activities offered to Members. Under the Council's Training & Development Policy, this Steering Group is empowered to monitor both take-up and feedback in relation to both the induction and core programmes.

Consultation

3. Evaluation forms are available at the end of the majority of events and Members are encouraged to complete these. These are analysed and the results presented to this Steering Group on a regular basis.
4. In relation to developing the Core Programme, Council Management Team and training providers are thoroughly consulted in advance of any proposals being reported to the Steering Group.
5. The personal development planning experience and evaluation processes are crucial to informing an effective core programme.

Monitoring of Take Up of Training & Development Opportunities

6. In January 2009 Council introduced an annual minimum requirement relating to the number of development activities Cabinet and non-Cabinet Members should attend over the course of a year, these being:
 - Cabinet Members 12 development sessions
 - Non-Cabinet Members 8 development sessions

7. Details of Members' attendance levels at all events offered between 6th May 2011 and 15th November 2011 are set out in Annex A to this report.

Analysing Take Up

8. The take up figures shown in Annex A to this report reflect Members engagement with a wide spectrum of development opportunities including events offered in the core programme, new additions to the core programme, external seminars, Personal Development Reviews¹ and topical briefings. In addition to this training offered by partner organisations such as the Police and Fire Authorities is included.
9. Members are encouraged to notify Democratic Services of any qualifying events they have attended through the year, which could be added to their personal targets.
10. Annex A shows to date:
 - All Cabinet Members have undertaken at least one qualifying event/activity since 6th May 2011. One Cabinet Member has reached the target of attending 12 development sessions and another has exceeded the target having attended 22 sessions in total during this municipal year.
 - 25 non-Cabinet Members have already exceeded their training targets for the year
 - 3 non-Cabinet Members are yet to undertake any qualifying events or activities

¹ 13 additional Personal Development Reviews (PDR) were carried out in October and early November 2011. This brings the total of Councillors having had a PDR this municipal year to 23.

11. In accordance with the Steering Group's role, Members may wish to consider how they will encourage Members within their individual groups who have not attended any qualifying events or activities to take advantage of the remaining sessions that will be offered throughout the remainder of the municipal year.

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 15th July 2011 and 15th November 2011 is summarised at **Annex B** to this report.

Summary of Feedback

Positives

14. Since last reporting Members have been offered an extensive programme with several in year additions. Feedback on events (**Annex B refers**), has, on the whole been positive. The Scrutiny Work Planning event held in July saw a 57.45% turn out, however as this was a work planning event no formal evaluation was undertaken. Word of mouth feedback was positive and the topics chosen at the event have now been included in various Scrutiny Committee work programmes.
15. Another well attended session was a briefing on the newly formed 'Fairness Commission' with 29.79% attendance from Members and comments including *'Very enlightening – refreshing to discuss ideas and an intellectual base for decisions and policies'* and *'thought provoking'*. A Pre-Council Briefing entitled 'Councillors and Social Media' was also well attended (34.04% of all Councillors came to this). This session was aimed at all Councillors, but in particular those less familiar with using social media. Comments included: *'Interesting, but terrifying!'* and *'generally a good programme detailing the pros and cons of social media'*.
16. Another very popular session was on the new Business intelligence Hub, with 21 Councillors attending over two different sessions. These sessions received some very positive feedback including; *'Very good, very detailed and very comprehensive'* and *'it was well*

delivered, although the scope was enormous and needs plenty of time to digest’.

17. The Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee organised a popular event in November 2011 with all Members of the Council invited to come along and meet with various key health partners from across the city. The format used was that of ‘speed learning’; with Members spending approximately eight minutes at each table talking to each of the partners. The event was well attended and verbally, many Councillors had commented that it was good to see that all four Group Leaders were in attendance. The format appeared to work well and could potentially be used for other sessions in future training programmes. It also allowed Councillors to ask their own questions of each of the key partners who attended.
18. In addition to this, Members attended several planning presentations on various live issues including one on ‘the community stadium’. As always these had a fairly high attendance level. However, whilst these are recorded on Councillor Training Profiles, at present, no evaluation forms are circulated to gather feedback.

Negatives

19. There have, however, been some more negative comments on the training provided and work needs to be undertaken to address these. Some key improvements ought to be made to the following in the not too distant future:

Font sizes/colours in both handouts and on slides

20. This has been highlighted as being a problem at several different sessions this quarter. As the Steering Group read through the comments in Annex B to this report this will become apparent, with comments such as:
 - *‘double sided hand outs please’*
 - *‘I was dismayed to see capital letters used in the title of the Fairness Commission. Capital letters used in full words make interpretation very difficult for people who have a visual impairment. Also key words in the presentation in a pale pink font’*

- *'...it would have been a score of 5 if it had been visually accessible'*
 - *PowerPoint presentation not very accessible, print size inconsistent, colours often too pale so couldn't read'*
 - *'overheads not easy to read'*
 - *'Many of the slides were unreadable - too small print'*
21. This is clearly something that needs to be looked at and one way forward would be to put together a short 'dos and don'ts' list or a short set of protocols for those delivering training to Councillors in York. This could be circulated by Democratic Services at the time training is arranged.

Attendance levels

22. Comments have been made at some sessions regarding low turn out such as:
- *'Very useful; delivered by a very enthusiastic team. A shame that there was only one of me'*
 - *'Excellent event but disappointing turn out'*
23. The core training programme and in year additions have been fairly heavy, with Members also having had commitments elsewhere; this could be one reason why turn-out has sometimes been very low (5 or less Members attending).
24. Where possible repeat sessions with an expected low turn out have been cancelled. However, Democratic Services are not always aware that a Councillor cannot attend and there have been an increasing number of sessions where Councillors who were expected have not turned up. This may be something that Members of the Steering Group could address within their own political groups. Alternatively, this Group may like to consider a generally accepted minimum level of attendance, under which a session would usually be cancelled (not including compulsory training such as that for the Corporate Appeals Panel).
25. Lastly, one Member had commented on their dislike of the current evaluation form. As per discussions at the previous meeting of this

Steering Group a draft new evaluation form is attached at Annex C to this report.

Core Programme 2011/12 – Next Steps

26. Planning is underway for a range of 'Community Events' for spring 2012. A short flyer advertising what these might be was sent out with the Core Programme booklet in August 2011. A report with more details about these will be brought to the Steering Group at their January meeting.

Options

27. Members are asked to note the report and give guidance on potential solutions to the issues raised in paragraphs 19 to 25 of this report.

Analysis

28. Analysis of feedback received is contained within the body of this report.

Council Plan 2011-2015

29. The Core Training & Development Programme allows Members to develop their knowledge and skills and to understand key issues that may affect their residents and the city as a whole. This leads to improved decision making and service design.

Implications

30. **Financial** – The annual training programme for Members is supported by the Member Development Budget, details of which are to be reported elsewhere on this agenda.
31. There are no known HR, legal or other implications associated with the contents of this report, other than the budgetary commitments referred to and the staffing resources to support implementation of the wider Core Programme.

Risk Management

32. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy there are no risks associated with the contents of this report.

Recommendations

33. The Steering Group are requested to:

- Note and comment on this report
- Give guidance on potential solutions to the issues raised in paragraphs 19 to 25 of this report.

Reason: 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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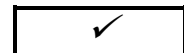
**Report
Approved**



Date 22.11.2011

Specialist Implications Officer(s) None

Wards Affected: All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Annexes

Annex A Attendance Levels

Annex B Evaluation of Core Programme of Events

Annex C Draft New Evaluation Form