

Member Support Steering Group

28th November 2013

Report of the Assistant Director: Governance & ICT

Update Report on the Core Training Programme (1st June 2013 to 1st November 2013)

Summary

1. This report informs Members of:
 - The current position
 - Take up at events offered to date
 - A summary of the feedback received
 - Analysis of the take-up
 - Future Core Programmes

Background

2. Prior to the 2013/14 municipal year, there was a requirement for Members to achieve a minimum training target due to the Council achieving I&DeA Member Development Charter Status in 2009. In March this year, the Steering Group took a decision not to seek to renew Charter Status on the basis of the current resources available. To reflect this, the Member Training and Development Policy was revised and approved at Council in July 2013. Following the changes to the Policy Members are no longer required to achieve a set number of training sessions, although a pared down core programme of essential and compulsory training is still available and Democratic Services have continued to keep a record of training sessions undertaken by Members.
3. 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.

Take Up at Events Offered to Date

4. The revised Core Programme was rolled out in July this year and to date the following sessions have been offered or have taken place:
 - Licensing Act Training.
 - Corporate Appeal Training (cancelled).
 - Speaking in Public with Confidence (cancelled).
 - 2 Pre-Council Seminars on Community Pharmacy and the Tour De France.
 - Adult Safeguarding Informal Session.
 - Corporate Parenting Informal Session.
 - Certificate in Local Government
5. Unfortunately, take up has been poor for most of the above sessions generally except the compulsory Licensing Training which had 12 members in attendance. It was identified that all Members on the Corporate Appeals Panel were up to date with their training and although a refresher was offered, it was not taken up. The informal policy sessions attracted a total of 5 and 3 members respectively and the Speaking in Public with Confidence training which had received a positive response in 2012, was cancelled as the number of Members who indicated they could attend did not warrant running the session. As in previous years, attendance at pre-Council briefings has been good, particularly at the Tour De France briefing which saw 10 members in attendance.
6. However, the new Certificate in Local Government is fully booked for its pilot year with good representation from Councillors, officers and the public, providing an invaluable opportunity for working, sharing and developing together.
7. The first module on Civic History draws to a close on 12 December 2013 and the new spring term commences on 16 January 2014. Feedback is being sought from the cohort of Members taking part in this innovative course developed by Democratic Services and the University of York.

Evaluation

5. Evaluation forms are available at the end of events or emailed afterwards and Members are encouraged to complete these. The responses are reported back to the Member Support Steering Group and used by Democratic Services to inform future core programmes.
6. In relation to the Licensing Act 2003 training, 10 evaluation forms were returned and on the whole Members found the training to be pitched at the right level and informative.
7. Feedback received for the Adult Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting policy sessions has been positive. Those attending found the sessions to be informative and the following feedback was received from a Member who attended the Corporate Parenting: *'The corporate parenting part of Councillors responsibilities is, sadly, understated. The efficiency and dedication of Officers responsible for this area has led to the automatic acceptance by many Councillors, including me that "things will just happen." However, this session brings home the diversity, complexity and importance of the care of children regardless of the type of family deprivation from which they suffer and which most of us take for granted. They are part of this countries future and are deserving of an investment of care – from all of us.'*
8. The feedback received to date for this municipal year and previous, indicates that informal policy sessions are enjoyed by Members. Officers conducting the sessions report that they have been useful and informative exercises and should be included in future Core Programmes.

Monitoring of Take Up of Training & Development Opportunities

Analysing Take Up

9. The take up figures outlined above reflect Members engagement with events offered in the core programme, and topical briefings.
10. Since the abolition of training targets, take-up in general has been low. Attendance at the statutory Licensing Training in June was good, but the two sessions on 'Speaking in Public with Confidence' were cancelled as few members indicated they would be able to attend, despite the sessions being in the Core Programme and reminders being sent via email. The two informal policy sessions

'Corporate Parenting' and 'Adult Safeguarding' were well received by those that attended but had low attendances. The two pre-Council briefings were attended reasonably well, possibly due to the convenient time prior to Council.

11. As in previous years, Members are encouraged to notify Democratic Services of any external events they have attended throughout the year. Following the introduction of the 'group pots' Democratic Services has been approached by several Members for assistance in booking external events and these have been noted.
12. 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 events or activities to date to take advantage of the remaining sessions that will be offered throughout the remainder of the municipal year.

Additional Training Requirement 2013/14

13. Since the Core Programme for 2013/14 was compiled, there has been a change in the leadership of the Liberal Democrat Group. The new Group Leader, Councillor Aspden, is keen to provide some skills training for the Group in becoming an effective opposition group on the Council.
14. Whilst traditionally, this Steering Group has not supported corporate development funds being allocated specifically to one group on the Council, in isolation, initial discussions with the Local Government Association indicate that they would be willing to offer Training Days with Lead National Peers or a similar LGA representative to all party groups.
15. This offer would assist with developing opposition Councillors in the following areas such as:
 - Performance within City of York Council – holding the Cabinet to account and promoting Lib Dem policies from opposition.
 - Community Champions – helping Councillors to represent their wards and engage with their local communities.
 - Policy Development – learning from best practice in other authorities to bring forward other ideas for York.
 - Personal Goal Setting – giving Councillors the motivation and skills to develop a clear set of targets and responsibilities.

- Team Building – giving groups the skills to work collectively as a team and develop inter-group communications and relations.
16. Discussions are still ongoing with the Local Government Association regarding funding but it is anticipated that the Liberal Democrat Group would part fund this programme which would include potentially 2 training days for Liberal Democrat Councillors in York. The Steering Group is asked to consider whether supporting this programme, in principle, would be an appropriate use of Member development funds, given the potential for take up of a similar model from other Groups.
 17. A full budget update on spend against the Member Development Budget will be provided at the next meeting of the Steering Group but sufficient funds would be available to part fund this programme, should the Steering Group endorse these proposals.

Future Core Programmes

18. Although the next Core Programme is not due out until next year, in view of the reported low attendance at this years events so far, Steering Group Members may wish to begin consulting their groups for opinions on potential subjects for future training sessions. It has been demonstrated through comments received this year and last that the informal policy sessions are particularly enjoyable. As these sessions are relatively easy to organise and low in cost, suggestions for areas of interest will be gratefully received by Democratic Services.
19. It has been identified by Officers that guidance on Declarations of Interest and the Councils Code of Conduct are possible areas for inclusion in future programmes.
20. A draft Core Programme will be outlined at the next meeting for consideration for 2014/15, taking into account the budgetary position.

Options

21. There are no specific options within this report, other than to decide whether to part fund the LGA support for the Liberal Democrat Group or not from the Council's Member Development Budget. Otherwise, Members are asked to note and comment on the report

Analysis

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

Council Plan 2011-2015

23. 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

24. **Financial** – There are no known financial implications associated with the recommendations in this report, other than meeting any potential costs, from within budget for 2013/14, for Liberal Democrat Group training.
25. There are no known HR, legal or other implications associated with the contents of this report.

Risk Management

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

Recommendations

27. The Steering Group are requested to note and comment on the report, in particular the evaluation of events, and to consider the proposals for Liberal Democrat Group training.

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

Author:

Laura Bootland
Democracy Officer
Democratic Services
Tel: 01904 552062

Dawn Steel
Head of Civic &
Democratic Services
Tel: 01904 551030

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Andrew Docherty
Assistant Director: Governance & ICT
Tel: 01904 551004

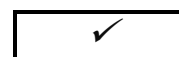
Report
Approved



Date 18.11.2013

Specialist Implications Officer(s) None

Wards Affected: All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None