

Member Support Steering Group

30th January 2014

Report of the Assistant Director Governance and ICT

Draft Member Training & Development Core Programme 2014-15

Summary

1. This report sets out the draft proposed core programme of training and development opportunities for Members for the 2014/15 municipal year.

Background

2. As part of the Council's budget setting exercise, in February 2013, Budget Council decided to reduce the annual base budget available for developing Members to £5k, as from 2014/15. In turn, this has led this Group to start looking to the future and to focus on providing a core programme of compulsory (statutory) or essential (to the Council, in achieving its ambitions) training, supplemented by a cost effective means for Members to obtain other key skills or knowledge central to their role. In response to the latter, an optional accredited certificate in 'Local Government & Democracy' has been developed, in partnership with the University of York.
3. The programme for 2014/15 therefore, will be a little lighter than past programmes to reflect the reduced budget and refocused provision.
4. The core programme will continue to be supplemented by ad hoc in-house additions; these usually arise when there is new information or practices that Councillors need to be made aware of. The programme is also supplemented by regional events where these are known and available through the regional network of contacts in advance of the programme being produced every year. However, consideration needs to be given to how any additional external activities will be funded in 2014/15. A separate report on this agenda sets out the current budgetary provision and comparative rates of spend in 2013/14.

The Programme

5. At this stage only the skeleton of the proposed programme is being presented to the Steering Group. There is still much work to be done to finalise the programme, with dates to be confirmed and officer and trainers' availability established. The provisional timings/dates set out in the programme are, therefore, subject to change.
6. The paragraphs below set out some of the highlights of the programme and should set out enough information for the Steering Group to consider approving the draft proposed core programme:
 - i. Training on statutory responsibilities – training will be provided for those Members sitting on all three Planning Committees, Corporate Appeals Panel, Gambling, Licensing and Regulatory Committee and Standards Committee.
 - ii. Policy Sessions – these were introduced to the core programme in 2012/13 and proved popular with Members and Officers. They provide an opportunity for Members to receive information on forthcoming key national policy changes in an informal setting. Discussions still need to take place between officers to identify suitable topics, but it is envisaged that we will offer one or two opportunities for Members.
 - iii. Pre-Council Briefings – there will be four of these throughout the year; subjects to be confirmed. Members are invited to suggest areas of interest for these.
 - iv. Equalities Training and Risk Management Training– these areas have been identified as essential training for Members in 2014/15 by Officers. Certainly the equalities training is in response to the ongoing Peer Equalities Review Assessment and the Council's strive to become an 'Excellent' Authority. Currently, a Scrutiny Review is underway looking at improving the Council's approaches to democratic engagement across all communities. As a part of that work, that Task Group is also looking at what training would benefit Members to assist in developing and understanding that wider engagement. The Task Group will report its recommendations before the end of the Municipal Year, at which point it would be appropriate to consider their recommendations on Member training.
 - v. Members Code of Conduct – primarily aimed at the newer Councillor or as a refresher for the more experienced Councillor this session will provide a standard refresher on the keys elements of the still comparatively new Code, including declarations of interest.

7. Group Pot

For the past 2 years, a 'pot' has been allocated to each of the main Groups for expenditure on external training activities, outside of the Core Programme, provided those were supported by the relevant Group. Spend by the Groups is itemised in the budget report elsewhere on this agenda. Members are asked to consider, in light of the reduced available budget for overall training to Members in 2014/15, whether these pots should be allocated. In 2013/14, the total allocated pot to Groups within the available budget was £5k. In 2014/15, that will be the total budget available to spend on Member training.

Future Core Programmes

8. At the last meeting of the Steering Group, Members received a report evaluating training offered to date during 2013/14 and demonstrating the comparatively low take up for the majority of even designated 'essential' training offered now that Council has removed the previously required target. Due to this comparatively low take up in this and recent municipal years, the lack of a dedicated Member Services Officer and the reduced training budget going forward, the Steering Group is asked to consider whether there should be a move away from offering anything at all other than the training on statutory responsibilities and updates to those.

Naturally, this approach would have to be varied in an election year. As it is suggested that there is a more significant need to train and induct newly elected Members in a wide range of key and essential areas.

Consultation

9. Consultation on the preparation of the Core Training Programme for Members is undertaken with this Steering Group. All Directors will be asked to identify any areas of statutory need additional to those already highlighted.

Options

10. Members can:
- i. Approve the draft core programme set out in **Annex A** to this report
 - ii. Suggest revisions to the draft core programme at **Annex A** to this report
 - iii. Comment on member training provision going forward.

Analysis

11. The Council achieved Member Development Charter Status in September 2010 and the provision of a robust policy and training and development programme was developed as a result.
12. The core programme in recent years has been devised to provide a wide range of opportunities for Members. Some of these were identified through Councillor Surveys on training provision within the Council and others by senior officers, in particular those where there is new statutory or policy information to brief Members on.
13. Due to budget constraints and the Council not seeking to renew the Council's Charter status for Member Development, there has been a move away from such an intensive programme.
14. Wherever possible the cost of providing training is kept to a minimum by using in-house knowledge and expertise. This will continue to be the case going forward as budgets reduce.

Council Plan 2011-2015

15. Having well informed and trained Members will continue to help the Council deliver its key priorities set out within the Council Plan 2011-15.

Implications

16. **Financial** – Any financial costs associated with the core programme 2014/15 will be met from the existing budgets available for Member Development. The majority of sessions within the programme will be provided in-house and will therefore incur little or no cost. If there is a need to employ external trainers for specific elements of the programme as it develops, these will be costed.
17. There are no known Human Resources, Legal, Equalities or other implications associated with the recommendations within this report.

Risk Management

18. There is a risk that the Council may fail to respond to some of the needs of its Members, in delivering a pared down core programme largely suited to the more experienced Member. Equally so, there is a risk to resources and to reputation if the Council continues to try to provide a fuller programme not supported by the attendance levels. It is for this Steering Group to consider and balance those respective risks.

Recommendations

19. Members are asked to:
20. (i) approve the outline draft core programme for 2014/15 as set out in **Annex A** to this report, for the reasons set out in paragraphs 2 to 6;
- (ii) consider whether they wish to proceed with the allocation of 'pots' to Groups in 2014/15, bearing in mind the amount of total budget available

Reason: To enable arrangements for the delivery of a core programme for the municipal year 2014/15.

Contact Details

Authors:

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

Laura Bootland
Democracy Officer
Democratic Services
Tel: 01904 552062

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Andrew Docherty
Assistant Director Governance & ICT
Tel: 01904 551004

**Report
Approved**

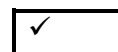


Date 20.01.14

Specialist Implications Officer(s) None

Wards Affected: None

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Annexes

Annex A Draft Proposed Core Programme 2014/15