Member Support Steering Group   **9th July 2015**

Report of the Assistant Director Governance & ICT

Review - Induction Programme 2015

Summary

1.   This report provides a review of the induction programme for newly elected and returning Members 2015/16, including the take-up of events and feedback received.

Background

2.   At the Member Support Steering Group meeting of November 2014, Members were presented with an induction strategy and programme for comment. The induction strategy was also considered and subsequently endorsed by Council Management Team and Group Leaders.

3.   The induction strategy comprised of statutory and recommended training for both newly elected and returning members but was also informed by the Local Government Association (LGA) recommendations on Member behaviour in York.

4.   The final table of induction events as supplied to Candidates in April 2015 is attached at Annex A for information.

Induction Strategy/Programme 2015/2016

5.   The overriding aim of the induction strategy was to provide the core essential knowledge to newly elected Members as quickly and as cost effectively as possible in an informative but enjoyable way.

6.   Re-elected Members were also encouraged to participate in the induction events offered, in particular the statutory training on planning, licensing and appeals and refreshers on the Code of Conduct, Member Officer Relations Protocol. Development Days

were also open to all Members following a recommendation from Council Management Team that all Members should attend.

7. Council Management Team and Group Leaders alike, were keen to ensure that the Induction and Core Programme for the coming year provided opportunities to help Members, new and returning, to develop the knowledge, skills and experience to improve overall behavioural standards and address some of the findings of the LGA review.

8. The vast majority of sessions were delivered internally, using Council Officer knowledge and expertise on statutory and the Council procedures. However, external trainers were commissioned to deliver the following sessions:

    - Chairs Training;
    - Development Days (making a positive impact, the Modern Member; effective questioning and listening; and equalities);
    - Casework and time management

9. The benefit of external trainers for these activities being impartiality and being able to present information and make suggestions informed by a wealth of experience elsewhere.

10. At the time of the last induction in 2011, the Council was still under Charter Status for Member Development. As part of the Charter Status, the Council was required to issue training attendance targets to Members of 12 sessions per year for Executive Members and 8 sessions a year for non-Executive Members. Since Charter Status was not renewed for financial reasons, these targets were no longer in place for the 2015 Induction. However, Democratic Services has continued to monitor take up in order to report back to the Steering Group and to ensure training is offered to all Members in accordance with the Member Training and development policy.

11. As part of the induction process the intention was to introduce the new IT application Membersphere to all Members. In hindsight, this was perhaps a little ambitious given the sheer amount of information Members are expected to take on board during the induction. Despite Membersphere log in details being provided to all Members immediately after the election, this 'soft launch' approach has not been successful and to date, use of the application by Members has been minimal. It is intended that a targeted launch event will take place in the coming weeks alongside some drop-ins/demonstrations for Members to experience the full functionality of the application.

Steering Group Members may wish to consider how they can promote the application within their respective Groups as this was a desire of previous Steering Group members to provide Members with a single site from which to access and communicate key information quickly.

Take Up

12. Attached at Annex B is a breakdown of attendances at the induction events, showing those attended by newly elected Members and those attended by returning Members. Overall, as expected, the Induction Programme was largely well attended by all newly elected members. Proportionately, fewer returning Members have attended the events they were specifically invited to e.g. David McGrath's Development Day sessions. It can be seen that where there is a legal statutory requirement for those returning Members to attend, e.g. Planning and Licensing Act Training, then the numbers were higher than for those events which the Council had labelled as 'Mandatory' such as Undertsanding Decision Making and Code of Conduct.

13. Alongside training sessions, visits to the Customer Centre were offered to introduce Members to the services offered. Visits to other council run sites, the Eco Depot and Mansion House and Guildhall were scheduled. All of these sessions were poorly attended and 3 out of 5 Customer Centre tours were cancelled at the request of the Service Manager.

14. Following representations made by candidates in the run up to the election about the timing of some of the induction training sessions, a number of events were moved to 5pm or 5.30pm to enable Members that work to attend as much as possible. A second revised Induction programme was then posted out to all candidates at the end of April 2015. The intention was to give candidates the opportunity to arrange time off, at least provisionally, with employers as early as possible in the process. Despite this, further representations were made by elected members during the induction programme about the timings of some of the sessions, in particular the Development Days and the possibility of the sessions being repeated at a later date and in the evening or at the weekend. Unfortunately it was financially and pragmatically near impossible to run 4 sessions, repeated, on evenings with this external trainer. Despite this, attendance exceeded expectations at both development days.

15.	There have been instances where some members have missed statutory training due to holiday or work commitments. To ensure all members have received the training required to fulfil their roles on committees, one to ones have been arranged with relevant officers and there are now no outstanding statutory training requirements.

Feedback

16.	Feedback has been sought from all Members as the programme drew itself to a close. Comments were requested on the events they had attended. A full range of comments to date is included at Annex C to this report for the Steering Group's consideration. Again, it is apparent that fewer returning Members responded with their feedback than newly elected.

17.	The most common theme identified from the feedback was the timing of some of the sessions which made it difficult for newer working members to attend. Although the dates and times had originally been given to election candidates well in advance, this still proved challenging.

Consultation

18.	Consultation took place on the final draft induction strategy with Group Leaders and Council Management Team on the delivery of the induction programme, and comments from this Steering Group were also taken into account. Every Member has been given an opportunity to comment upon the induction and training they received as part of ongoing commitment to developing Members and learning from their experiences. Consultation will also take place on any gaps identified for potential inclusion in the in year Core Programme for all Members.

Options
19.
	(a)	To note the feedback received and take no further action;
	(b)	To discuss and identify gaps in need and learning and consult on inclusion in the Core Programme.

Council Plan

20.	Having well informed and trained Members will continue to help the Council deliver its key priorities set out within its current and any new Council Plan for the ensuing four years of the new administration.

Implications

21. There are direct implications associated with this report. However, resource and cost implications of Option b above will need to be properly identified before proceeding to formally engage any further external trainers if suitable needs are identified by this Steering Group. An update on current spend against this year's Member training budget will be available to assist at the meeting.

Risk Management

22. If appropriate gaps are not catered for in the Core Programme there is a risk that newly elected Members may feel disengaged with their need and desire for training. It is apparent that Members have their greatest need for learning and development in their first year or two of becoming a councillor.

Recommendation

23. It is recommended that the Steering Group note the attendance and feedback received and consider whether they wish to recommend any next steps for the Core Programme for all Members

    Reason: In order to comply with the Council's agreed training and development policy for Members and monitor the provision of successful training.

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| **Report Approved** | √ | **Date** 30/06/2015 |

Specialist Implications Officer(s) None

Wards Affected: All | √ |

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None.

Annexes:

Annex A – Induction Programme
Annex B – Attendances
Annex C – Feedback