

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Leader and Cabinet 3 July 2008
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DRAFT MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2008-2011

Purpose

1. To request Cabinet to approve a draft Member Development Strategy for recommendation to Council for adoption.
2. This is not a key decision, however the need for Members to own a co-ordinated and comprehensive Member Development Strategy justifies the submission of this item to Cabinet and Council. The issue was first published in the April 2008 Forward Plan.

Background

3. The Council's Corporate Governance Inspection in October 2006 highlighted weaknesses in the Council's arrangements for training and developing its Members, in response to which a wide-ranging programme was put in place during 2007-2008. Whilst comprehensive, the various initiatives (including mentoring, Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) training modules, in-house sessions, national leadership academy) lacked effective co-ordination and were not sufficiently targeted to meet identified needs. As a consequence, several events, especially those taking place in the latter part of the civic year, were poorly attended or were cancelled altogether.
4. The strategy seeks to bring all training initiatives together in one place, and to ensure that such initiatives are based on training needs identified by Members themselves through a self-assessment process.

Considerations – Development and content of the Strategy

5. The strategy was based on a draft provided by the IDeA, and has since been extensively modified to reflect local circumstances by a task group set up by the then Staffing and Communication Portfolio Holder. The draft was circulated to all Members for comment.
6. The strategy includes clear statements about its aims and purpose. Its objectives will be achieved through the agreement and implementation of annual work programmes, within which all Member training and development initiatives will be identified and costed.

Considerations – EMT Champion

7. The Corporate Manager for Finance and Support Services has been designated as 'champion' for the strategy, to ensure that it achieves and maintains an appropriate level of senior management ownership and input. The following extract from section (6) of the strategy provides further information on the role of the shared responsibilities of the EMT champion and Portfolio Holder:

'The Member Development Portfolio Holder and EMT Champion will have responsibility:

- *To champion and encourage Member development in the council.*
- *To keep the Member Development Strategy and the Training and Development Programme under review through shaping and prioritising member development activities.*
- *To promote the Strategy and training and development activities among all Members of the council.*
- *To monitor and evaluate training and development activities.'*

Implications

8.

Financial	<p>The strategy will be developed and adopted within existing resources. Annual training and development programmes, however, may have potentially significant financial implications and final programmes will need to be mindful of resource constraints affecting the organisation. The lack of resources, for example, has meant that Members' training needs will be assessed through a self-assessment questionnaire, whereas other authorities have invested in consultants to carry out one-to-one appraisals with all Members.</p> <p>The timetable for the development of annual programmes, set out in section (5) of the strategy, allows for the financing of the training programme to be considered in conjunction with the annual budget-setting process, in order that growth bids to fund specific initiatives can be submitted to Members for consideration.</p> <p>The current Member training budget is around £5,000, equivalent to less than £100 per Member per year. Whilst we will seek to use in-house expertise to provide training wherever possible, and there may be external funding opportunities through sources such as the Regional Improvement Partnership, it is considered that current budgetary provision may not be sufficient to enable the Council to meet its Members' training and development needs.</p>
Legal	<p>The Constitution requires all Members wishing to sit on the Planning and licensing committees to undergo appropriate basic and refresher training, therefore these will form standing elements of training programmes to be delivered every year.</p>
Staffing	<p>Democratic Services has been identified within the strategy as the team which will oversee the development of the annual training programme and operational delivery of specific initiatives identified in the annual work programmes. No additional resources are proposed to enable officers to carry out this role, therefore officers' ability to be proactive in arranging and evaluating initiatives may be compromised by the requirements of their wider workload.</p>

Risk Management	<p>The Council runs a risk that inadequate training and preparation mean that Members are not properly equipped to carry out key roles. This could in turn lead to substandard decision-making and inappropriate behaviour which could be successfully challenged to the detriment of the Council's position and reputation.</p> <p>The lack of training and development resources within the Council has prevented one to one assessments being offered to Members, and may subsequently pose a risk to the range and variety of training which can be provided.</p>
Equal Opportunities	<p>The development of annual training programmes will be an inclusive process based on Members' identified training and development needs, individually and collectively.</p> <p>Specific training in equal opportunities is likely to be identified as part of the Council's Equality Standard work.</p>

Effect on Corporate Objectives and Service Priorities

9. As stated in the strategy, all member training and development activity will have a primary aim of achieving and delivering the Council's corporate objectives.

Consultation

10. As stated above, the strategy was circulated to all Members for consultation during May-June 2008. Two comments were received. Both respondents supported the principles within the strategy but hoped that the resulting training and development session could be timetabled at times which best suited Members given their other commitments. These comments will be taken on board during the self-assessment process, a section of which will ask Members to indicate their preferred days and times to attend training sessions.

Next steps

11. Subject to Cabinet and Council approval, the strategy will be delivered through an annual work programme. This programme will be informed by a self-assessment process which all Members will be asked to complete in the Autumn of 2008. The Member Development Task Group will develop the self-assessment form for agreement by the Portfolio Holder, and will subsequently review general feedback and work up a training plan for agreement in February 2009 and implementation from April 2009.

Recommendations

12. Cabinet is invited to consider the Member Development Strategy 2008-2011 and recommend its adoption to Council.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

None

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