

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Environmental Services Portfolio Holder 24 March 2009
AUTHOR/S: Chief Executive / Democratic Services Manager

MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2009-2010

Purpose

1. This report summarises the background work and consultations, which have informed the development of a Training and Development programme for the 2009-2010 Civic Year and recommends that the Portfolio Holder approve the plan and associated documents.

Background

2. The Corporate Governance Inspection in October 2006 highlighted weaknesses in the Council's arrangements for training and developing its Members. Since this time, a wide range of initiatives (including mentoring, Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) training modules, in-house sessions, national leadership academy) have been put in place to address the weaknesses identified; however, programmes have lacked effective co-ordination and have not been sufficiently targeted to meet identified needs. As a consequence, several events have been poorly attended or cancelled.
3. In order to define objectives for Member Development more clearly and to enable an integrated and co-ordinated programme to be put in place, the Council developed and agreed a 3-year Member Development Strategy in July 2008. 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.
4. The self-assessment process involved a questionnaire which was circulated to all Members in September 2008. The questionnaire asked Members to rank a number of subject areas in terms of their current level of knowledge, and the extent to which they considered they would benefit from training and development in each subject using a traffic light scoring system. 32 Members returned completed questionnaires, representing a response rate of 57%. Further background to the questionnaire, and a full analysis of the results, is available to view in **Appendix A (attached)**.

Draft Training and development programme

5. **Appendix B (attached)** sets out a draft Training and Development Programme for the 2009-2010 Civic Year. The programme is based on Members' responses to the questionnaire and aims to identify all Member training within one document. This will help to ensure future Member training meets identified need, thus avoiding duplication and 'training fatigue' which has reduced attendance at, and consequently the effectiveness of, previous training. Such a programme will go some way to addressing the weaknesses with previous and current arrangements identified in paragraph 3 above.

Considerations – Responding to in-year requests for training and development

6. Whilst the stated intention is for the training and development programme to provide a single point of reference setting out events which will be organised, there will be occasions where a Member or group of Members wish to attend training seminars or where an officer wishes a wider session to take place on key issues which may arise during the course of the year.
7. A further weakness of the Council's current arrangements is that training is not evaluated with sufficient robustness. At present, the only quantitative indicator measures the number of Members who have attended a skills training session during the year. Whilst this proved useful in demonstrating an increased commitment to providing training sessions (the figure improved from 46% during 2005-2006 to 79% in 2007-2008), now that the quantity of training has reached a high level, it is the quality of training which needs to be measured. It is considered that effective post-course evaluation can only be done once there has been a pre-training assessment of the objectives of the training, including how it will assist the Council in meeting its strategic aims. To address these issues, a draft policy and evaluation form have been developed.
8. The Portfolio Holder has authority to approve the attendance of members at training and development events and has requested the development of a set of policy guidelines to assist her in allocating the limited budget available. A draft set of guidelines for this purpose is **attached** at Appendix C.
9. The policy guidelines will be used in conjunction with a pre-and post-evaluation form (draft **attached** at Appendix D). The form may be completed by a Member, an officer (or a combination of the two) and is an adaptation of that used by managers to evaluate training events undertaken by their staff, and has the following purposes:
 - (a) As above, to enable the Portfolio Holder to determine *ad hoc* requests for training and development arising during the year;
 - (b) To enable post-course evaluation to be carried out to establish whether the course met its stated objectives, and explore how undertaking the training has benefitted attendees in their roles.

Considerations – EMT Champion

10. EMT designated the Corporate Manager for Finance and Support Services to act as senior officer champion for Member training and development to ensure that it achieves and maintains an appropriate level of senior management ownership and input. The following extract from section (6) of the approved Member Development 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.'*

11. As a consequence of the departure of the Corporate Manager for Finance and Support Services, it has become necessary to designate another member to fulfil the role of champion for member development. The Democratic Services Manager has led on arrangements for Member Development, therefore it is recommended that his line manager-designate, the new Executive Director for Finance and Support Services, be designated EMT champion for member training, upon taking up their appointment later in 2009.

Options

12. The Portfolio Holder is invited to approve the training and development programme, policy guidelines and evaluation form as presented, to amend or reject these documents.

Implications

13. Financial	The Member training budget for 2009-2010 is around £5,100. Whilst scrutiny and standards have specific budgets from which Member training can be funded, the future programme has been drafted with limited available resources in mind. Wherever possible, events will be run in-house. Where external consultants are engaged, services will be encouraged, and may be required, to contribute to the overall costs from within their budgets.
Legal	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.
Staffing	As indicated above, much training during 2009-2010 will take the form of in-house briefings by officers, due to the limited funds available. Such sessions will have an impact in terms of diverting officers from their operational duties.
Risk Management	<p>Inadequate training and preparation may 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 continues to limit the range and variety of training which can be provided, thus increasing the risk identified above.</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 has been built into the draft training and development programme for 2009-2010.</p>

Consultations

14. The programme has been endorsed by the task and finish group established by the Portfolio Holder and subsequently by the Executive Management Team. Preliminary discussions have also taken place with lead officers designated to carry out specific

training identified within the plan, from which feedback has been very useful and positive.

Effect on Corporate Objectives and Service Priorities

15. The Member Development Strategy makes clear that all member training and development activity will have a primary aim of achieving and delivering the Council's corporate objectives (referred to as Aims, Approaches and Actions from April 2009).

Conclusions/Summary

16. It is hoped that the Portfolio Holder will endorse the programme and supporting documents as a realistic and achievable means of delivering Member training and development during 2009-2010.

Recommendations

17. The Portfolio Holder is invited to:
 - (1) Note the results of the 2008 survey of Members' training and development needs, as summarised in **Appendix A** attached.
 - (2) Consider, comment on and approve the following:
 - (a) The Member Training and Development Programme for 2009-2010 attached at **Appendix B**;
 - (b) The draft criteria for responding to requests for councillor training attached at **Appendix C**;
 - (c) The draft pre- and post-course evaluation form attached at **Appendix D**
 - (3) Designate the Executive Director for Finance and Support Services as champion for Member Training and Development following their appointment, the duties of the champion in the interim undertaken by the Democratic Services Manager.

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

SCDC Member Development Strategy, approved by Council on 17 July 2008

Contact Officer: Richard May – Democratic Services Manager
Telephone: (01954) 713016
e-mail: Richard.may@scambs.gov.uk