

APPENDIX A

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE 2008 Analysis of responses and next steps

1. Documents making up this phase of the project

- This covering report;
- Numerical analysis of responses (available from the Democratic Services Manager)
- Draft training and development programme for 2009-2010
- Pre- and post-evaluation training form and criteria
- Matrix of individual survey responses (confidential to the Member Development Portfolio Holder and Democratic Services Manager)

2. Background

The Council adopted a Member Development Strategy in July 2008; in doing so it committed to achieving a more co-ordinated approach to Member training and development than had previously been the case.

The strategy sets out the Council's objectives for Member training and development as follows:

- To provide elected members with flexible and responsive training and development that is based on individual and organisational needs.
- To ensure members are in a position to function fully within their roles, working with officers and partners, especially parish councils, in order to achieve the vision and aims of the council.

In order to meet these objectives the Council will agree and implement an annual training and development programme. The programme has been informed by the first annual survey of Members' training and development needs, carried out during September-October 2008.

3. The survey response

The survey was circulated to all Members in early September 2008 via e-mail; Members were requested to complete the questions and submit their responses on-line, although hard copies of the document were also made available for those preferring to use this response method.

A total of 32 responses were received, representing a 57% return rate.

4. Headline responses, section by section

(i) Categories and rationale

For each of sections A-D, Members were asked to assess a number of different training and development topics in terms of which of the following statements most applied to them:

Red – I don't feel that my current levels of knowledge and understanding in this area are sufficient and feel that I would benefit from training and development.

APPENDIX A

In analysing the survey results, ticks in the red boxes have been treated as the highest training and development priority areas.

Amber – I have a basic knowledge and understanding in this area but would benefit from some further training and development in it.

In analyzing the survey results, ticks in the amber boxes have been treated as medium training and development priority areas.

Green – I feel confident that my knowledge and understanding of this area is high and do not feel that I require training and development at this time.

In analyzing the survey results, ticks in the green boxes have been treated as the lowest training and development priority areas.

(ii) Section A – Specific skills and knowledge

This section sought to assess Members' training needs in terms of the Council's direct services, including their knowledge and experience of the Contact Centre. The following subjects were identified as the highest priorities:

- Helping constituents with Council Tax and benefits enquiries (11 red)
- Planning: Section 106 legal agreements (8)
- New communities: Planning, community facilities and infrastructure (7)

The following subjects had the most ticks in the 'red' and 'amber' boxes i.e. areas in which Members felt further training and development would be beneficial:

- Helping constituents with Council Tax and benefits enquiries (11 red:13 amber)
- New communities: Planning, community facilities and infrastructure (7:17);
- Environmental health (5:16)
- Planning: Conservation and design (4:17)
- Planning: Section 106 legal agreements (8:13)

The preferred methods of training in the above subjects were in-house training provided by Council officers or external trainers.

The following subjects were identified as the lowest priorities:

- The contact centre (13 green)
- Waste and recycling (12)
- Planning: Development Control (12)
- Planning: Appeals and enforcement (12).

(iii) Section B – The local and national context

This section sought to assess Members' training needs in terms of keeping abreast of national developments and policy areas impacting on their leadership and representational roles in the district. The following subjects were identified as the highest priorities:

- Recent and forthcoming legislation; national policies, strategies and programmes (14)

APPENDIX A

- Regional working (GO-East, EERA and the Regional Efficiency Partnership) (9)
- Cambridgeshire Together and the Local Area Agreement (8)

The following subjects had the most ticks in the 'red' and 'amber' boxes i.e. areas in which Members felt further training and development would be beneficial:

- Local government performance management (6:19)
- Cambridgeshire Together and the Local Area Agreement (8:19)
- Regional working (GO-East, EERA and the Regional Efficiency Partnership) (9:15)
- Recent and forthcoming legislation; national policies, strategies and programmes (14:10)

The following subjects were identified as the lowest priorities:

- Role of, and relationship with, parish councils (25 green)
- Roles and responsibilities of local government tiers (10)

The preferred methods of training in the above subjects were in-house training provided by Council officers, external trainers and e-learning.

(iii) Section C – Corporate Governance

This section sought to assess Members' training needs in terms of enhancing understanding of the depth and breath of their roles and responsibilities in governing the district council. The following subjects were identified as the highest priorities:

- Introduction to risk management policies (4)
- Corporate objectives, and the links to service plans, team and individual targets (4)
- Effective scrutiny (4)
- Introduction to the Local Strategic Partnership and partnership working (3)

The following subjects had the most ticks in the 'red' and 'amber' boxes i.e. areas in which Members felt further training and development would be beneficial:

- Introduction to how the Council operates financially and the impact this has on elected members (1:18)
- Introduction to the Local Strategic Partnership and partnership working (3:14)
- Corporate objectives, and the links to service plans, team and individual targets (4:12)
- Introduction to risk management policies (4:11)

The following subjects were identified as the lowest priorities:

- Members' Code of Conduct and procedures for complaints against councillors (21)
- Member/officer roles and relationships (17)
- How the Council is structured, who does what and where, strategic aims and objectives, service priorities (15).
- Role of elected members within communities and community leaderships (16).

APPENDIX A

The preferred methods of training in the above subjects were in-house training provided by Council officers or external trainers.

(iv) Section D – Technical skills

This section sought to assess Members' training and development needs in terms of specific skills such as chairmanship, public speaking and IT literacy. The following subjects were identified as the highest priorities:

- Advanced IT skills (11)
- Intermediate IT skills (8)
- Media and communications; skills and responsibilities (5).

The following subjects had the most ticks in the 'red' and 'amber' boxes i.e. areas in which Members felt further training and development would be beneficial:

- Media and communications: skills and responsibilities (5:15)
- Advanced IT skills (11:7)
- Intermediate IT skills (8:7)
- Negotiation and influencing (1:14)

The following subjects were identified as the lowest priorities:

- Basic IT skills (19 green)
- Time management (18)
- Dealing with constituents (19)

The preferred methods of training in the above subjects were in-house training provided by Council officers or external trainers.

(v) Response summary – percentage of answers in each category

| Section | RED | AMBER | GREEN |
|-----------------------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| A – Specific skills and knowledge | 20 | 48 | 32 |
| B – Local and national context | 26 | 46 | 28 |
| C – Corporate Governance | 9 | 41 | 50 |
| D – Technical skills | 11 | 34 | 55 |

The responses show there is a greater overall training and development need in specific service knowledge (section A) and the local and national context, with a particular emphasis on relevant current and forthcoming legislation and partnership working.

(vi) Section E – Preferred time of training

- (1) Time of day** – respondents showed a preference for daytime (27 comprising 17 morning and 10 afternoons) over twilight (6) and evening (7) sessions. Whilst the majority of Members responding expressed a preference for daytime meetings, we will look to cater specifically for those preferring, or only able to attend, evening training, when devising the 2009-2010 training programme.

- (2) Days of the week**

APPENDIX A

Preference for weekdays was almost equal:

Monday (15)
Tuesday (16)
Wednesday (14)
Thursday (15)
Friday (11)

Only two respondents indicated a preference for weekend sessions.

(3) Separate sessions or hold training on other meetings dates

The clear majority of preferences (21) were for training events to be held on the same day as other meetings, over the option to hold sessions on separate days (8).

5. Conclusion, recommendation and next steps

1. The Portfolio Holder and task group are very grateful to Members whose responses have provided an invaluable indicator of high- and medium- priority training and development needs, and have provided a steer on Members' preferred dates and times and methods of training. The responses will enable Member training and development during 2009-2010 to be co-ordinated on a number of levels:

(i) A training and development programme identifying

- Generic training areas of high priority as identified by the first annual survey;
- Mandatory training required by Members of the Planning and licensing committees;
- Specific training and development events necessary to fulfil specific roles (including new Member induction)
- Other training and development priorities identified by the Portfolio Holder and Executive Management Team.

(ii) An individual training and development plan for each Member, based on their role within the Council and priorities identified in the survey.

(iii) Means of evaluating 'Ad hoc' requests for individual and group training using the agreed criteria and pre-evaluation form (Appendix C to this report).

2. The working group is requested to comment on the results of the survey and draft programme, suggest changes as it considers necessary before endorsing the draft programme for consultation with the Executive Management Team and Members. The intention will be for the final programme to be submitted to the Portfolio Holder for formal approval at her Portfolio Holder's meeting on 24 February 2009.