

Agenda Item 14

Standards Committee

4 November 2009

DV



Member Development (training) – up-date

Summary

The Council, through adopting the Member Training and Development Strategy and committing to the Member Development Charter has shown the importance it gives to member development. The Member Development Working Group meets regularly to discuss development issues, progress in respect of the Charter and to monitor development opportunities undertaken and planned to ensure that these have a direct link to the Corporate Strategy and represent value for money. The Working Group recommended the appointment of a Member Champion for Member Development; Councillor Ann Liverton was appointed Member Champion at the Annual meeting of the Council in May 2009.

One of the local Performance Indicators is to ensure that training is undertaken by all Councillors who serve on regulatory (Standards and Audit and Governance Committees) and those with quasi-judicial functions (Licensing and Enforcement and Development Management Committees). These are reported quarterly.

Recommendation

That the Committee notes the Council's progress in embedding Member Development within the organisation and considers making recommendations concerning future progress.

a) Reasons for Recommendation

The Standards Committee asked for an up-date on Member Development to be reported to the November meeting of the Committee. The Member Development and Training Strategy sets out the aim for member development to be embedded in the culture of the Council for the benefit of the Council and the community it serves.

b) Alternative Options

The report is presented to up-date Members of the Standards Committee in response to a request from Members and so there is no alternative option. However the Committee may wish to discuss the way in which the Member Development initiative is being rolled out.

c) Risk Considerations

The Standards Committee has asked for information on training in regulatory and quasi judicial Committees to monitor that this has taken place. This is presented for information and for monitoring purposes.

d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

The training programme is within the current budget for Member training and conferences.

e) Date for Review of Decision

No decision as such but Members may wish to review this subject annually.

1 Main Body of the Report

The last report to the Standards Committee on Member Development was considered at its March 2008 meeting. This report reminds Members of the key points of that report and provides an up-date to the Committee on progress.

Background

The Member Training and Development Strategy was adopted by Council in June 2007 and the cross-party Member Development Working Group was set up to progress the Council's commitment to Member Development. The reports of these meetings are referred to the Executive Board for consideration. This ensures that all Councillors are kept up to date on the initiative and helps the Council to recognise its strategic importance. The status of Member Development has been further enhanced by the appointment of a Member Champion for Member Development at the annual meeting of the Council in May. (Remit of this Champion role is attached as Appendix A).

The Working Group agreed the format of the Members' Personal Development Reviews and recognised their purpose was to help the Council achieve its priorities through the development of its Members. The Group piloted the Reviews and actively encouraged other Members to take full advantage of this initiative. The on-going process is two-way with Councillors identifying their strengths and skills which can be used for the benefit of the organisation. This skills register was used by Group Leaders when considering allocation of Members to Committees and Outside Bodies and to positions of responsibility at the annual meeting of the Council in May 2009.

Councillors are regularly encouraged to take responsibility for their own development – this is not achieved solely through training sessions and seminars/conferences but may include attendance at Executive Board meetings, work undertaken at Task and Finish Forums, involvement in local democracy events and using the 'clickable' links to useful website articles contained in the EDDC's weekly newsletter, the Knowledge.

As at October 2009, all Councillors have undergone a Review and have a Personal Development Plan. Councillors are now being invited to up-date their progress through a 6 month review.

Learning needs identified through the Personal Reviews have now collated and a Learning and Development Plan has been considered and approved by the Working Group.

The Learning and Development Plan covers the following categories:

- Core skills
- Committee specific skills
- Community Skills and Leadership

Training in regulatory and quasi judicial Committees

The Committee specific skills element of the Learning and Development Plan includes training specific to Members appointed to regulatory and quasi judicial committees at the annual meeting of the Council – Standards, Audit and Governance, Licensing and Enforcement and Development Management. These are reported as a Local Performance Indicator.

To date all Members on the Standards, Development Management/Planning Inspections Committees and Audit and Governance Committees have undergone training and can now take an active role in the decision making process.

The Licensing Manager has arranged a number of training opportunities including shared sessions with other authorities but one Member appointed to the Licensing and Enforcement Committee has yet to attend. Until he has undergone relevant training, he cannot be

called to sit on one of the Licensing and Enforcement Sub Committees. If he remains untrained, despite opportunities, the Party Whip will be advised when allocation of seats is being considered prior to the Annual Council meeting in May 2010.

Shared learning

Members are encouraged to share their experience and learning. For example the relevant political group provided a Councillor appointed mid-term with an experienced Councillor to act as her mentor. Also Councillors attending Conferences are invited to complete a follow-up information sheet which is circulated to all Members as a way of sharing learning. (Sample attached as Appendix B).

Where possible, training events are shared with other organisations/authorities. For example the Chairmen of the 4 Overview/Scrutiny Committees attended a Scrutiny event organised by Mid Devon District Council and the Town Councils were invited to send a delegate to recent EDDC Planning Training for Members. In the feedback provided, the benefits gained from networking opportunities were clearly identified. Members will also recall that we have shared training on the new standards complaints assessment procedures with South Hams and Teignbridge procedures and have informal reciprocal arrangements to make 'other action' and training sessions available to other authorities within Devon.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Member Development and Learning Evaluation Strategy was adopted by Council in July 2009. The Working Group has a role, together with the Standards Committee and the Strategic Management Team to monitor the effectiveness of the Member Development initiative, to ensure that the training and development helps the Council to achieve its priorities and also value for money. The Strategy requires on-going evaluation of Councillor Development at different levels, namely:

Level 1 evaluation to check that the development and training has achieved its aims and objectives; feedback to be used to influence the way learning opportunities is provided in the future.

Level 2 evaluation to check whether the development and training has achieved changes in attitudes and behaviours.

Level 3 evaluation to monitor the impact of development and learning on helping the Council to achieve its Corporate Priorities/aims.

South West Member Development Charter

EDDC submitted its Charter Action Plan to South West Councils and this has been accepted. The next step in achieving Charter status is the assessment process. The Files of Evidence have been submitted to the Assessment Team which will visit the Council for a day of assessment interviews at the end of the year.

The following is an extract from the covering letter of the File of Evidence submitted to the South West Council's Assessment Team in support of this Council's application for Member Development Charter Status. This has been signed by the Leader, Portfolio Holder-Resources, Member Development Champion and Chief Executive:

"At East Devon District Council we are constantly striving to improve and exceed the expectations of those living, working and visiting our district. The framework for accreditation of the South West Charter for Member Development has been an ideal way to progress our commitment to providing all of our Councillors with the tools to enable them to carry out their diverse roles effectively and to meet the challenges ahead. This portfolio of evidence, compiled to meet the criteria of the SW Charter for Member Development, is submitted with the support of the Council as a whole; recognising the value of the Council's investment in the development of all Members.

“This Council recognises that its Councillors are a key resource and bring with them a range of experience, knowledge and skills. A vital element of the Member Development initiative has been to identify their strengths so that these can be fully utilised and shared for the benefit of the Council and the community it serves. The identified areas of development have been used as the basis for the forward programme for Member Development; the areas of strength, skills and interests are now used as a reference point when making appointments to various positions, including Member Champions.

“The Council is currently facing a number of challenges, including the uncertainty of the outcome of the Local Government Review, changes in the way the Council is inspected/assessed, increasing public expectations, partnership working and budget shortfalls. The Member Development initiative is helping Councillors individually and collectively to develop their skills, knowledge and performance. This initiative links with, and supports, the Council’s agreed corporate strategy and priorities. This means that the Council will be best equipped and prepared to meet the challenges in a positive way and will benefit all those who live, work and visit this district.

Legal Implications

Training on law and procedure is necessary to enable this Council to comply with the legal requirements placed upon it.

Financial Implications

Budgetary provision has been included for this item in the 2009/10 financial year.

Consultation on Reports to the Executive

- ❑ The Member Development and Training Evaluation Strategy was referred to the Executive Board in April 2009.
- ❑ The reports of the meetings of the Member Development Working Group are referred to Executive Board to be noted and discussed.

Background Papers

- ❑ Member Development and Training Strategy
- ❑ Member Development and Training Evaluation Strategy
- ❑ Reports of the meetings of the Working Group
- ❑ Charter Files of Evidence

Diana Vernon
Democratic Services Manager

Standards Committee
4 November 2009