

Report of City Solicitor

Report to Member Management Committee

Date: 24th February 2015

Subject: New Members induction programme

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

As in previous years, all newly elected Members following elections undergo an extensive and informative induction programme delivered over a period between May to July.

After discussions involving group support managers and feedback from last year's newly elected Members, also taking into consideration the changes in Member demographics and their time demands, this year's induction programme has been compressed and will be delivered over three full days spread over May and June.

The programme will still include the core events, such as Using ICT, Learning the Ropes of Council Meetings, Local Government Finance, Code of Practice and Being a Corporate Parent. It will also include a new session called the Doorstep Challenge Equality training, which will look at the pitfalls and risks associated with not following the Public Sector Equality Duty, for both the council and Members personally.

The session is being delivered by Ioda, an external consultancy and training company who specialises in equality and diversity training, and will be opened up to all elected Members.

Recommendations

1. Member Management Committee is asked to note the contents of this report and comment on the new structure of the Induction Programme 2015 and the outline of the proposed Doorstep Challenge Equality training.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the induction programme 2015 and the proposed Doorstep Challenge Equality training.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Last year's Member feedback on the induction programme was to have a shorter, compressed programme that Members working full time could plan ahead for. This year's programme will be delivered over three days during May and June and will comprise of the usual core events. It will also include the session called the Doorstep Challenge Equality training.
- 2.2 The training programme was drawn up jointly by legal services, head of governance services and the head of equality. The aim of the training is to make Members aware of the risks of not following the public sector equality duty requirements, and to equip them with the tools to recognise the pitfalls particularly around unconscious bias and appropriate language usage, when dealing with groups that have protective characteristics under the Act.
- 2.3 The intention of the training is that Members' should be able to conduct their public roles without the fear of unknowingly breaching any equality legislation, while exercising their public duties, for both the council and personally.

3 Main issues

Induction 2015

- 3.1 Induction is a vital programme for new councillors and sets the tone for their future engagement with learning and development. Two main areas for improvement were noted and these have been accounted for in the 2015 programme.
 - The length of the programme. Members preferred the programme to be much shorter, so that Members that work full time alongside their council role could plan ahead for.
 - The sessions to be shorter. A number of Members would have preferred to have more introductory level sessions, with the option to request further information if needed.

Doorstep Challenge Equality training

- 3.2 It is important for Members to have the awareness of their duties and responsibilities under the Equality Act, and to avoid any pitfalls that could result in the breach of the legislation and the code of practice, whilst performing their public duties.
- 3.3 The training would provide Members with the tools to be able to effectively challenge decisions and confidently hold difficult conversations that are not deemed discriminatory to another group of people whilst remaining within the legislation.
- 3.4 An initial session will be taking place in February, chaired by Councillor Peter Gruen. A repeat session will take place as part of the new Members' induction. An invite will be sent out to all Members. In order to allow opportunity for all Members to be able to attend, further sessions will need to be scheduled in throughout the year.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.2 The course content is supported by the Member Development Working Group.

4.3 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.4 The diversity of the Member Development Working Group ensures that any initiatives and projects take account of equality issues.

The proposed training sits well within the councils Equality Improvement Priorities, which is closely aligned to the Vision for Leeds, the City Priority Plan and the Best Council Plan.

4.5 Council policies and City Priorities

- 4.6 The recommendations put forward in this report relates to the aims and priorities of the Best Council Plan and City Priority Plan.

4.8 Resources and value for money

- 4.9 There are costs attached to the delivery of the equality training. Provisions have already been made within the member development budget to account for these costs.

4.10 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.11 This section is not relevant to this report.

4.12 Risk Management

- 4.13 Members may be personally liable and subject to risk in failing to follow their public sector equality duty and in return, equally the council if it is unable to demonstrate that sufficient training has been provided.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1** Members should be able to challenge decisions from the public and different groups of people without the fear of failing to comply with the equality legislation. The proposal in this report illustrates the importance and need for all Members' to be made fully aware of their roles and responsibilities under the Equality Act, so that they are able to recognise and avoid the risks and pitfalls when carrying out their public duties.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1** Member Management Committee is asked to note the contents of this report and comment on the new structure of the Induction Programme 2015 and the outline of the proposed Doorstep Challenge Equality training.

7 Background documents¹

- 7.1** None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.