



Report of the Chief Democratic Services Officer

Member Management Committee

Date: 4th March 2009

Subject: Raising the Political Awareness of Officers – Proposed Learning & Development Courses for Officers

Electoral Wards Affected:

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Executive Summary

1. The objective of this project is to:

'Improve the political awareness skills of front-line and management staff through the development and delivery of a learning programme and associated resources.'

2. This will be achieved by the development of training and development modules which promote an appreciation of Councillors' various roles and pressures and assist officers in finding appropriate communication and consultation methods, identify common misconceptions and develop ways of addressing them.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Member Management Committee on progress made to deliver a learning and development project to improve the political awareness skills of front-line and management staff.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 Drivers for the project include the following:

- From Good to Great project/aspirational culture
- New performance management 'Standards for Managers' ('Work with Partners and Members' competency)
- Anecdotal evidence regarding improvement required (Member Management Committee comments 8th October 2008), Members Survey
- Member Engagement Working Group outcomes.

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1 This learning and development project aims to:
- promote an appreciation of Councillors' various roles and pressures and assist officers in finding appropriate communication and consultation methods
 - identify common misconceptions and develop ways of addressing them
 - help officers identify key personal objectives and actions to make improvements
- 3.2 Essentially a 'foundation course' will be developed for all officers addressing political awareness. The delivery and content will be adapted according to the audience (one session will be aimed at senior officers and one at front-line workers).
- 3.3 In addition a 'menu' of further training modules will be developed to enhance political awareness and courses will be taken according to need. Details of the type of training modules to be offered are shown in Appendix 1.
- 3.4 The training modules are being developed by Democratic Services in conjunction with HR Learning and Development representatives. Additional advice and input has been received by the Member Development Working Group and Directorates.
- 3.5 The majority of the modules will be run by Democratic Services staff and, on occasion, in conjunction with Elected Members. The Development Directorate has offered to pilot the modules prior to full role out.
- 3.6 The administration of the project once up and running will be carried out by HR.
- 3.7 It is anticipated that the full programme will be ready in early autumn 2009.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

- 4.1 Effective and successful authorities rely on officers working closely with Members. It is vital that officers appreciate and value the role of an Elected Member. Effective learning interventions help to ensure that officers are adequately equipped to undertake their duties.

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications and the project can be met within existing resources.

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 The delivery of a learning and development project to improve the political awareness skills of front-line and management staff will address a number of drivers, including;

- From Good to Great project/aspirational culture
- New performance management 'Standards for Managers' ('Work with Partners and Members' competency)
- Anecdotal evidence regarding improvement required (Member Management Committee comments 8th October 2008), Members Survey
- Member Engagement Working Group outcomes.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 The Member Management Committee is asked to;

- endorse the proposed content of the learning and development project
- note the roll out timescales and management arrangements for the project

Background papers