

## **Appendix 2 - Ensuring the future effectiveness of the Member Development function**

### **Introduction**

This discussion paper considers the current work undertaken by Member Development and makes some proposals for altering the services delivered in order to ensure that it continues to fully meet the learning and development needs of Leeds' elected Members.

### **Recommendations**

Members are asked to consider and comment on the proposals in this document.

### **Background**

Current patterns of work and emerging projects suggest that the focus of Member Development is changing. There are two main drivers for change:

1. **Rapid changes in government policy and legislation** (the Health and Localism bills being two of many examples). As a result, councillors need to be kept up to speed with changes and respond quickly to new ways of working.
2. **Financial pressures and withdrawal of regional funding.** Learning and development will need to be accessed in more imaginative and resourceful ways.

In addition, and partly due to the changes above, senior Members (eg portfolio holders) have become more involved in Member Development, by steering and leading on learning related to their own portfolios.

### **Response to the challenges**

In order to work effectively in this new climate, Member Development is working more closely with senior elected Members, officers and project managers across the Council to ensure that Members are involved in and kept up to speed with the change process. Instead of simply reacting to change and informing Members about it (ie through ad hoc seminars and briefings), officers are recognising the requirement to anticipate the impact, involve Members in discussion and support them through it by providing timely and appropriate learning opportunities. The development of the management standard for officers, 'Working with Members and Partners' has been one factor influencing this change in approach.

It is therefore proposed that Member Development builds on the changes by moving to a more 'demand-led' model. Instead of identifying and 'pushing out' learning and development activities, Members and service areas will be 'pulling in' our service for advice, and involving the function in wider projects at a much earlier stage. This would necessitate Member Development officers having a

sharper focus on organisational goals and business needs and working in greater collaboration with officers from other service areas and partner agencies. The Member Development Working Group would be the key forum for this, transforming the ideas and suggestions from Executive Members and officers into effective learning and development programmes.

Potential features of this model could include:

- Increased working with Executive Members to identify not only their own individual needs but areas for developing other Members in issues concerning their portfolio. This could include extending the induction programme to include development and support for new Executive Members and developing portfolio-based learning programmes instead of ad hoc events.
- Officers at CLT level being encouraged to consider the impact on Members (in terms of learning and development) of new projects and ways of working, and a greater involvement of the MDO in corporate projects.
- A greater emphasis on coaching and facilitating. Personal Development Plans (for senior members especially) are becoming more about facilitation – helping members to help themselves rather than simply providing learning solutions. The role of the Member Development Officer as coach (reflecting, challenging, energising, influencing etc) could be explored.
- Demonstrating impact and value for money. Recent experience and the current financial climate are also placing greater emphasis on establishing the *value* of activities – eg identifying return on investment and demonstrating impact both on an individual level, organisationally and for the community at large.

Leeds recently gained Charter Plus – the exemplary level award for good practice in Member Development. The proposals above incorporate the recommendations made to Leeds in order for us to maintain the standard. One additional recommendation, however, concerns sharing knowledge and good practice with other authorities, so it is therefore proposed that we continue to focus strongly on regional activities. In addition to general collaborative working, regional projects for Yorkshire and the Humber in 2011 include:

- Development of a regional learning portal for councillors and Member Development Officers
- The West Yorkshire Shared Induction programme
- Support for authorities working towards the Member Development Charter or establishing a Member Development function
- Development of a regional mentoring scheme run on a reciprocal basis.

It should be noted that sharing induction with the other four West Yorkshire authorities in 2010 saved Leeds City Council in the region of £1,500. Proposals to develop shared induction and ongoing training further in 2011 are likely to more than double these savings.

## Examples of how the new approach is working in practice

Below are a number of examples of how the new approach to Member Development is already working:

- *The proposed delegation of Streetscene functions to Area Committees.* This is an example of a project where Member Development were involved at the outset of the project and will be working closely with Neighbourhoods and Environment officers. By embedding learning and development at the start it will hopefully be seen as an integral part of the project and not as an 'add-on' instigated by Member Development. There will also be opportunities for joint learning with Area Management officers.
- *Corporate Parenting and safeguarding.* We have acknowledged that this project is key and cannot be delivered purely by the MD function. With support of Cllr Blake a project team will be established (consisting of officers from Childrens Services, Leeds Childrens Rights, and a Corporate Carer (Member rep) in order to address issues such as member engagement, delivery, involvement of looked after children in the training etc.
- *Coaching and facilitating.* One councillor's recent PDP included discussion on how to delegate work effectively and how to develop other Members in their portfolio areas. Another PDP involved an element of coaching which resulted in an action-plan being drawn up and regular monitoring meetings to track progress. Options to identify a mentor from another authority are being explored.
- *Demonstrating impact and value for money.* In December 2010 we ran a focus group for new Members in order to consider the value and effectiveness of induction. This model was very successful, resulting in number of suggestions for improvements which will be discussed with Member Management Committee in January 2011. This method will be used to evaluate other large-scale projects. Work is also being undertaken with Planning officers to review the annual compulsory training – eg is the provider effective; should different techniques be used; can we identify some more cost-effective options.
- *The Future of Health in Leeds.* Work is ongoing to establish a learning programme on the changes to Health and Public Health legislation and the subsequent impact on Leeds in terms of organisational change and ways of working. It has involved discussion with the relevant Exec Member, Scrutiny Chair and Leader and input from partners such as Leeds Initiative and the NHS. The programme will be launched with a seminar, the learning from which will be shared with officers by way of podcasts and bulletins.
- *Regional working.* The withdrawal of RIEP funding for Member Development is resulting in the development of a number of shared, sustainable resources that can be used and adapted by Councils to suit their own requirements. These include the Web Portal for Member

Development which will incorporate podcasts, downloadable learning materials and toolkits, discussion forums, an events calendar, feature articles and a mentoring scheme.

- *Political Awareness training for officers.* The Member Development Working Group is providing input into the development of a new learning programme for officers, aimed at enhancing the political awareness skills of new and existing managers. The programme will include practical question and answer sessions with Members, as well as mentoring and shadowing opportunities. The Working Group will play a key role in the evaluation of the course's effectiveness.

### **Future actions**

It is proposed that the new approach is discussed in more detail by the Member Development Working Group and Member Management Committee, and then formalised through the new Member Development Strategy for 2011-15.