

Member Development Annual Report

2010-2011



Foreword

I am proud to present the fifth Member Development Annual Report. This report illustrates our successes in Member Development over the last municipal year and sets out our plans for the future.

As community leaders, it is vital that elected Members are supported to be as effective as they can possibly be. In order to support Members in their varying roles and to continually improve performance, it is important to offer a range of learning and development options which are tailored to each individual. This year the Member Development Working Group put together a variety of training programmes which we continually monitored and evaluated over the course of the year. We worked in conjunction with Member Management Committee and Executive Members to ensure that new initiatives were implemented quickly and effectively.

A number of key developments have taken place in 2010-11. The year began with the induction of eleven newly-elected Members. A range of events were provided and each new councillor played a full and active part in the programme, undertaking personal development discussions, meeting with their mentors and contributing to the learning and development sessions on offer. The new Members met again in December to reflect on their experiences and provided us with some useful feedback to improve the programme further in 2011.

In June we were assessed for the Member Development Charter, and were proud to be presented with the exemplar award – Charter Plus. Leeds was one of the first authorities in the country to achieve this standard, which clearly demonstrates the council's commitment to the learning and development of Members. As an exemplar authority, we are expected to share our knowledge and good practice with others, and have been doing this through our work with other Councils in the region and LGYH (Local Government – Yorkshire and Humber). The Charter principles will continue to underpin our work and we will strive to make further improvements to the services we offer.

Four Members undertook qualifications this year, achieving level 3 of the Institute of Leadership and Management. We would like to extend our congratulations to these Members who took the time to attend residential courses and carry out private study despite pressures of work and family life. The knowledge and skills they have gained will be of great gain to the Council and to themselves as individuals. We hope to offer the opportunity for further study to others this year.

Looking forward to the coming year, despite cuts to regional funding and support, we will continue to work in partnership with other councils in the Yorkshire and Humber region in order to widen the range of learning and development we offer to Members. For example, summer 2011 will see the launch of a new regional web portal, MORE (Members' On-line Resource Environment). This portal will allow the sharing of learning resources, offer opportunities for networking and mentoring, and provide feature articles from councillors and subject matter experts.

Further work will be done in the area of evaluation, to ensure that the learning that Members undertake has a real and lasting impact, both in terms of individual development and actual benefits for the communities we represent.

The Member Development function continues to adapt and improve to ensure that our Councillors are well equipped to deal with the fast pace of change and on-going financial pressures on local government. I look forward to reporting further achievements in the coming year.

Cllr Graham Hyde
Chair of the Member Development Working Group

Member Development in 2010-2011

Achievements

Induction

Background

Eleven new Members were elected in 2010, and were offered an extensive programme of learning and development which enabled them to settle into their roles quickly and effectively. As in previous years, the programme included basic events to ensure that Members are equipped with key information to get started, in addition to events tailored to specific roles.

The Induction programme included:

- Finding Your Feet – Services and support for new Members
- Introduction to ICT
- Learning the Ropes – the Conduct of Council Meetings
- Speaking in the Chamber
- Understanding the Code of Conduct
- How the Council Works – Structures and Decision Making
- Understanding Overview and Scrutiny
- Meet the Corporate Leadership Team
- Local Government Finance Made Simple
- Managing your Casework
- Being a Corporate Parent.

Attendance

Attendance at Induction events was good, with an average of 7 Members attending each session. Where Members were unable to attend, this was generally due to existing work commitments.

A number of events were shared with other Councils in the West Yorkshire region. Sharing events in this way brought the following benefits:

- reduction in cost by avoiding duplication
- avoidance of event cancellations due to higher take-up
- opportunity for new Members to network and build relationships outside the authority.

Further collaboration with regional colleagues has taken place over the course of the year.

Evaluation and Impact

All induction events were evaluated as 'excellent' or 'good'. Further evaluation took place in December 2010 in the form of Induction focus groups. New Members came together to review the programme and the impact it had had on them. Both sessions

proved extremely useful and a number of improvements and new ideas were identified, including:

- Sessions to be compressed into first 5 or 6 weeks following election to ensure high turn-out
- Include dates of key meetings in the programme so that new Members can attend in a shadowing capacity (Executive Board, Scrutiny etc)
- Consider greater involvement of existing Members in the Induction programme
- Provide written information about each service area (structure charts, key contacts etc)
- Include a session on Area Management.

Feedback received from 2010-2011 induction process and the suggestions made for refining and improving the induction programme in terms of timing and content have been integrated into the Induction planning process for the 2011-12 programme.

Exit Interviews

This year consideration was also given to Members leaving the authority. Exit interviews were offered to every councillor who stepped down or who was not re-elected. Four Members took up the offer (three had face-to-face interviews, one completed a questionnaire). A number of common issues were identified and findings from the interviews were taken back to the Member Development Working Group for consideration. The key themes arising were:

- Potential barriers caused by employers who lack understanding of councillor role and benefits it can bring to the organisation
- Impact and influence of group politics and negative perception of certain meetings, eg full Council
- Support for members in split wards
- Formality and cultural aspects surrounding member/officer relations.

The issues and comments arising have been reported to Member Management Committee and will be fed in to a number of projects taking place in 2011. These include:

- Working with employers – a regional project aimed at improving employers' understanding and appreciation of the role of councillors
- Political Awareness training for Leeds City Council officers
- A review of the meeting process for full Council.

Core Skills Training

Background

Core skills are identified in the Member Development Strategy as those skills which a councillor needs to fulfil his or her role effectively. A number of events took place with the aim of furthering Members' skills in these key areas:

- **Leading the Community**

A course on 'Building Resilient Communities' was delivered, specifically focussing on the Prevent programme. It provided Members with the historical context to terrorism and radicalisation, along with more practical guidance in recognising vulnerable individuals.

A regional event on Social Media took place with the aim of introducing Web 2.0 tools to councillors who were unfamiliar with the internet. Members were able to try out Twitter, Facebook and blogging and discuss the potential benefits and pitfalls of these communication methods.

- **Partnership Working**

A number of events took place this year with partner groups, in order to build relationships and share knowledge. A seminar 'The Future of Health' introduced Members to the government's plans for the NHS and the merging of Public Health with local authorities.

An event on Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) gave Members the opportunity to find out about how the new city region LEP would work and to discuss the potential benefits for economic development and local communities.

As part of the compulsory programme for Licensing Members, a session took place with West Yorkshire Police, to discuss concerns and issues relating to the late night economy in the city centre.

- **Governing the City**

A number of events relating to governance took place. These included specific events for Members of the Corporate Governance and Audit committee, covering topics such as managing risk, pensions and finance and networking events for committee chairs in the region.

Several events covering the impact of the economic downturn and the government's Comprehensive Spending Review were hosted regionally this year. These included: 'Unlocking your savings potential; Responding to the spending review', 'Understanding Shared Services' and 'Increasing productivity through Total Place.'

- **Managing Yourself**

The 'Managing Yourself' competency includes skill areas such as ICT, time management and communication skills. This year a number of ICT one-to-ones took place, either on specific learning days, or at Members' convenience. A wider programme of training on the new Casework system also provided a grounding in the new software for 10 Members.

A new course, 'Managing your Casework' was held for new Members, and involved existing Members who attended to share their tips and experiences.

- **Leadership**

Places were offered on two external qualification programmes this year: the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) at Northern College, and the Local Government and Improvement (formerly IDeA) Leadership Academy.

Both courses focused on community leadership, transformational leadership, communication skills, accountability and performance management.

Four Members attended and gained a level 3 qualification which they are able to use to benefit the organisation and themselves through gaining of a number of transferable skills.

"I now understand what my personal leadership style is, and learnt how to adapt it to suit the circumstances and achieve results."
Leadership Academy Graduate, 2010-11

"The course gave an excellent grounding in leadership and was tailored to the councillor role. I now feel more confident and able to challenge existing practices and ways of working."
ILM Graduate, 2010-11

Evaluation and Impact

All Core Skills training events were evaluated immediately after delivery and received ratings of either Good or Excellent.

Further evaluation was carried out through the Personal Development Plan process, where Members are asked to comment on how the training they have attended has impacted on their role and the community at large.

Where Members attended an external qualification, a face-to-face discussion with the Member Development Officer took place at the end of the course in order to:

- Ensure that clear benefits were identified
- Identify changes in behaviour and approach
- Devise an action plan so that Members can use their newly acquired skills
- Determine whether the event provided value for money.

Role specific skills

Background

Members take on a number of different roles during their time in office. A programme is in place to support these roles and this year also saw the introduction of role descriptions, clarifying the duties that Members are expected to perform. The new role descriptions are being used as part of the PDP process, to ascertain any learning needs as Members move into different areas of work.

The following role specific training programmes took place during 2010-11:

Area management

Project staff ran a number of workshops to explain the process for the devolution of environmental functions to Area Committees. Members were able to discuss and debate the impact of devolution of services, and consider potential pitfalls prior to its roll-out in the new municipal year.

Planning and Licensing training programme

This programme included compulsory sessions on Governance and Conduct, a Planning Update and a Licensing event covering the implications of new legislation.

Attendance

Approximately two thirds of Members attended the Area Management workshops, and further events are planned for the new municipal year.

Dates for the compulsory sessions were identified in the Members' Diary in order to provide advance notice.

Attendance at the compulsory events can be summarised as follows:

- 100% of new Members appointed to Plans Panels attended the compulsory introduction
- 80% of Plans Panel Members attended the compulsory update
- 100% of new Members appointed to Licensing Panels attended the compulsory introduction
- 87% of Licensing Members attended the compulsory update
- 87% of Planning and Licensing Members attended the Governance and Conduct training.

Non-attendance at the compulsory training is monitored by the Whips.

Seminars

This year the Member Development Working Group and Whips selected several 'hot topics' for seminars. The content of these was discussed with the relevant Executive Member, who also chaired the event. Each topic was related to a key project or piece of legislation affecting the Council:

Seminars Undertaken:

- Liberating the NHS – the Health White Paper
- Free School Meals
- The Future of Health
- Local Enterprise Partnerships.

Having a fewer number of seminars, focussing on significant topics, increased attendance, with an average of 20 Members attending each event. It is therefore proposed that a similar approach is taken in 2011-12.

Conferences

Members have also attended a variety of externally provided conferences covering a range of topics, such as:

- Local Historic Environment
- Public Health and Health Promotion
- Engaging the Big Society
- Tackling Worklessness
- Place-based productivity
- Changing the way we do Housing
- Community-based budgets.

External conferences provide a valuable opportunity for councillors to hear from the experts in an area, share experiences, and learn the most up to date practices and network with other officers, Members and subject-matter experts. Councillors are asked to share their learning when they return so the widest benefit for the council can be achieved.

Member Development in 2011-12

Areas for Development 2011-12

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 have become more involved in Member Development. Whilst Executive Members have previously been involved in chairing events, they have not generally had much input into the selection or design of training. However, the significant changes taking place in local government have meant that they are now keen to disseminate important information about their portfolio areas.

Responding 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.

Member Development will build on these 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.

Key areas for development in 2011-12

Potential features of this new way of working are listed below:

- **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 – supporting members to help themselves rather than simply providing learning solutions. The role of the Member Development Officer as coach (reflecting, challenging, energising, influencing etc) will 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.

Regional Working

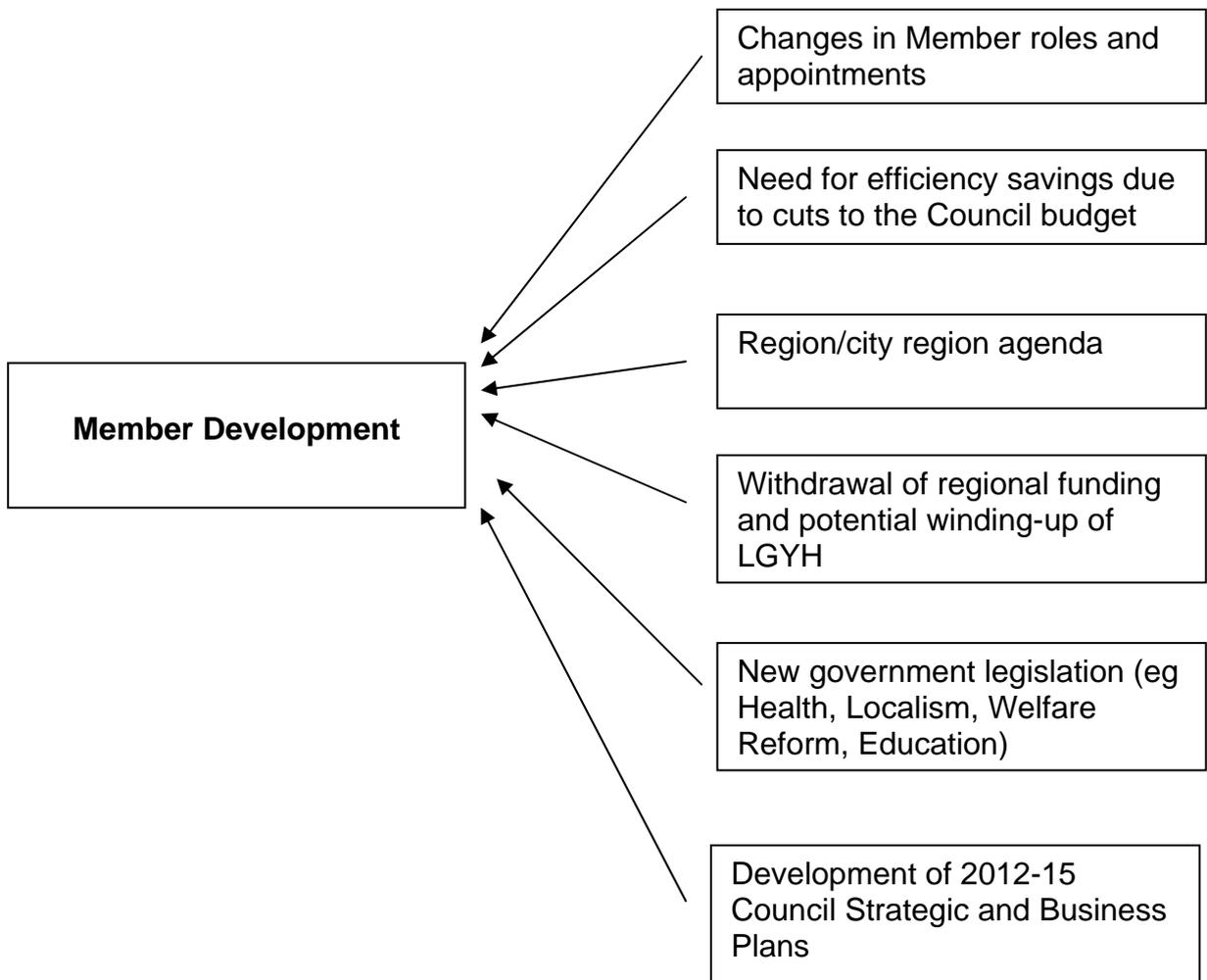
On gaining Charter Plus, several recommendations were made to Leeds in order for us to maintain the standard. The key suggestion concerned sharing knowledge and good practice with other authorities, so it is therefore proposed that we continue to focus strongly on regional activities. In addition to general collaborative working, regional projects for Yorkshire and the Humber in 2011 include:

- Development of a regional on-line 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
- The Institute of Leadership and Management qualifications for Members provided by Northern College
- Development of a regional mentoring scheme run on a reciprocal basis.

Developing the Member Development function

This section summarises our plans for 2011-2012. It considers the key drivers for change and how the function will develop as a result of these drivers.

Key Drivers 2011/12



Key Action Areas 2011-12

