

**Report of Chief Officer, Democratic and Central Services**

**Report to Member Management Committee**

**Date: 25 October 2011**

**Subject: Member Development**

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**

The purpose of the Member Development Working Group is to formulate, progress and monitor Member Development activities. The Group recently held its first meeting of the municipal year and discussed its work programme for 2011-12, which will include :

- Reviewing this year's induction programme and planning induction events for 2012
- Working with Executive Members to develop the annual events programme
- Working with Local Government Yorkshire and Humber on joint regional projects
- Monitoring attendance and evaluating the compulsory Planning and Licensing Programme
- Developing proposals to improve the 'exit process' for Members stepping down or not re-elected.

This report provides Member Management Committee with an update on progress with the above projects.

**Recommendations**

1. Member Management Committee is asked to note the contents of this report and comment on the proposals for improving the exit process for councillors as outlined in 3.9.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on learning and development issues relating to elected Members. Specifically, this report contains the following items:
- A review of the Induction programme 2011
  - An update on the 2011-12 events programme and regional working
  - Findings from the 2011 exit interviews and proposals to improve the exit process for Members.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 Member Development is a key component of the Council's Annual Corporate Governance Statement, specifically in relation to the principle of *Developing Skills and Capacity*, where the Council states that it will ensure that those charged with the governance of the Council have the skills, knowledge and experience they need to perform well.
- 2.2 The Council was awarded 'Charter Plus' status in June 2010. As an exemplar authority, Leeds is expected to share good practice and become a lead authority in regard to innovative and effective practice. This is resulting in an increase in regional activity (eg Leeds' hosting events, supporting a regional network and acting a hub for key learning activities).
- 2.3 Charter Plus also stipulates that members must be able to describe how learning and development activities have helped them as individuals to carry out their role, and that Members are able to identify what changes and improvements have taken place as a result of their learning. More effective methods of evaluation are being undertaken in order to demonstrate how learning is providing value for money and demonstrating return on investment.
- 2.4 The Member Development Working Group leads on all issues relating to Member Development, instigating development sessions, monitoring attendance and evaluating their effectiveness.

## **3 Main issues**

### **Induction 2011**

- 3.1 A comprehensive programme for new Members (and existing Members where appropriate) took place between May and July this year. 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.
- 3.2 Following feedback from new Members in 2010, the programme included the following features:
- Shared regional events
  - Events held at a variety of venues (not just the Civic Hall)
  - Visits to key locations, such as the Contact Centre

- Focus on local working, through sessions such as 'Area Management and Locality Working', 'Using the Neighbourhood Index' and Community Engagement
- A compressed induction period spanning 5-6 weeks rather than spread over two months as in previous years.

3.3 All induction events were evaluated as 'excellent' or 'good'. Sessions on Corporate Parenting, Speaking in the Chamber and Managing Casework were rated particularly highly; these sessions used a variety of interactive learning methods which proved popular and effective. Main suggestions for improvement concerned:

- The timing of events. A number of new Members would have preferred more events in the early evening.
- Greater participation from existing Members. New Members found events where existing Members were present (either as delegates or providing input) particularly useful, as they were able to learn from the experience of others.

Further evaluation of induction will take place in December 2011 in the form of Induction focus groups. New Members will come back together to review the programme and the impact it had had on them; this will then inform the programme for 2012.

### **Events programme 2011-12**

3.4 The Member Development Working Group is planning a number of events and programmes for the autumn. These include:

- Continued updates on the Welfare Reform agenda and the implications of proposed changes
- Planning and Licensing Updates, including a shared regional 'planning masterclass' with Bradford City Council covering Planning Reform, Quality in Design and Economic Value
- The launch of a new Health programme, including an event on health inequalities and a round-table event with GP consortia representatives
- A session on 'Exploring the passage of a Bill' provided by the University of Leeds Politics department. This event will explain how legislation is passed and consider the role of Select Committees using real-life case studies and input from student interns currently based at Westminster.

In addition, Leeds has been asked to host a regional Localism Conference on 1<sup>st</sup> November, at which LGG (Local Government Group) will lead debates and workshops on topics such as localism and health, neighbourhood planning and working with the third sector.

3.5 In order to further improve the overall learning and development programme for Members, this year the Chair of the Member Development Working Group will be meeting with Executive Members to gather further ideas and suggestions for events and briefings.

- 3.6 The first compulsory Planning Update session took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> September. Nineteen Members attended and a repeat session is planned for 22<sup>nd</sup> November. Feedback about the new training provider (Planning Co-operative) was extremely positive; Members found the sessions on Localism, Neighbourhood Planning and the National Planning Policy Framework particularly useful. A number of further evaluation points have been noted and will be fed back to the trainers or Joint Member/Officer Working Group as appropriate:
- The session did attempt to cover a lot of ground; Members have suggested that some content is streamlined or perhaps circulated as additional information
  - Whilst the session was very interactive it was suggested that small-group work may have been more effective in identifying and allowing Members to discuss key issues
  - Some concerns were raised about the 'Equality in Decision-making' aspect of the training. This short session covered the risks to planning decisions under the Equality Act 2010, where 'due regard' has not been paid to equality issues, and financial and reputational implications that legal challenge can have to a local authority. A number of Members had concerns about the relevance of this topic to Planning training and inclusion in the programme.

### **Regional Working**

- 3.7 LGYH (Local Government Yorkshire and Humber) have identified several projects for regional councillor development this autumn including:
- MORE website. This new website, to be launched in October 2011, will be an easily accessible site where Members can download learning resources (including podcasts and webinars), network with colleagues across the region, gain topical updates on legislative and policy issues, and share good practice.
  - Qualifications. LGYH are supporting a further cohort of the 'Institute of Leadership and Management' (ILM) course at levels 3 and 4 (A level and undergraduate level). This course will take place at Northern College, Barnsley.

### **Exit interviews**

- 3.8 This year four Members (who either stepped down or were not re-elected) took part in the exit follow-up process, either by undertaking an interview or completing a questionnaire. A summary of the exit interview findings can be found at Appendix A.
- 3.9 During the interview process a number of suggestions were made to improve the way that councillors leave the authority, and to recognise and celebrate their achievements during their time in office. These include:
- Ensuring that officers properly understand the election process and treat individuals sensitively when arranging the removal of Council equipment. Also ensuring that they apply a common sense approach to ex-councillors who

require a short grace period to tie up loose ends regarding specific pieces of casework

- Signposting members who are not re-elected to areas of support and potential roles for the future
- Finding practical ways to celebrate and evidence achievement, for example, by providing learning records which demonstrate transferable skills, encouraging individuals to create a personal record of their time in office.

3.10 It is proposed that the Working Group consider the suggestions above and work with officers to put in place a number of measures aimed at improving the exit process.

3.11 It is also suggested that further recognition of learning and development is given through:

- the provision of certificates for key learning undertaken (such as Induction)
- recognising Members who are successful in gaining qualifications and celebrating their achievement
- producing a formal learning 'record of achievement' that Members can use during their time in office and take with them after they leave the authority.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

4.1.1 The proposals put forward in this report have been endorsed by and have the support of the Member Development Working Group.

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

4.2.1 The diversity of the Member Development Working Group ensures that any initiatives and projects take account of equality issues. We include equality and diversity elements in our training programmes wherever possible to ensure an embedded approach.

### **4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities**

4.3.1 The recommendations put forward in this report relate to the aims, priorities and performance measures of the Member Development Strategy. These include:

- being fully committed to developing Elected Members in order to achieve the council's strategic outcomes and improvement priorities
- provide a member-led strategic approach to Elected Member development
- demonstrate that learning and development is effective in building capacity.

#### **4.4 Resources and Value for Money**

4.4.1 A number of options for partnership working and reciprocal arrangements are being explored in order to ensure that any Member development activity is delivered at low cost and is sustainable. Examples of this include our work with the University of Leeds and LGYH to develop shared programmes. In addition we will be using the MORE website to develop and share resources across the region.

#### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

4.5.1 This section is not relevant to this report.

#### **4.6 Risk Management**

4.6.1 The compulsory training programme for Members of regulatory panels is in place to ensure that any planning and licensing decisions are made impartially with sound judgement and for justifiable reasons. If Members do not undergo the training prior to taking part in the process, and therefore have not acquired the requisite skills and knowledge, the Council is at risk of legal challenge.

### **5 Conclusions**

5.1 This report provides Member Management Committee with an update on the work of the Member Development Working Group and seeks Members' views on current activity and projects, specifically the proposals to improve the exit process.

### **6 Recommendations**

6.1 Member Management Committee is asked to note the contents of this report and comment on the following proposals:

- to improve the exit process for councillors who step down or who are not re-elected, as outlined in 3.9
- to ensure that learning achievements are recorded and recognised appropriately as outlined in 3.11.

### **7 Background documents**

None used.