

Committee: Standards Committee
Date: 23 November 2009
Title: Member Training
Author: Richard Auty, Head of Community Engagement, ex500

Agenda Item

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Item for
decision

Summary

- 1 This report outlines the council's current approach to member training, as requested by the Standards Committee.

Recommendations

That the committee requests the Strategic Management Board to review the current approach to member training and put in place changes it considers necessary.

Background Papers

IDeA website

South East Employers website

Impact

Communication/Consultation	None
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Finance	The council maintains a member training budget
Human Rights	None
Legal implications	Members need to ensure they are aware of changes in law in areas such as planning
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

- 2 Members attend a variety of conferences, seminar and training courses each year, along with training sessions and briefings held within the council, either delivered by officers or external organisations/individuals.
- 3 These opportunities range from member attendance at the annual Local Government Association conference, through committee-specific training held before meetings to courses covering a specific aspect of a member's work.
- 4 For new members, a day-long induction session is held after each district council election. An officer group has been set up to review the content of the 2007 session and develop the programme for 2011.
- 5 The committee should however note there is no officer with overall responsibility for coordinating member training in the authority. Until the beginning of 2008, an officer in the HR department was working on individual training plans for members. However, that work stopped when she left the authority and the council's in-house HR function was replaced by the current arrangement with Essex County Council's HR Partnership. Responsibility for member training was not included in the contract with the partnership.
- 6 There is an annual amount for member training which is contained within the Democratic Representation budget. The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager has day-to-day responsibility for managing the Democratic Representation budget, overseen by the Head of Community Engagement.
- 7 Until recently, all revenue spending requests had to be authorised by the Strategic Management Board. However, due to the stability of the council's finances, this requirement has now been lifted.
- 8 Generally speaking, training opportunities are identified either by the lead officer for the committee, or another officer with close association to it, or where the chairman of the committee has identified a knowledge gap. Often training opportunities are publicised through officer networks.
- 9 An agreed process covering Members Budgets was put in place by the previous Chief Executive and current Leader of the Council in October 2007. It is attached as Appendix A, although it has not been updated since it was introduced.
- 10 Some examples of training delivered to members recently include:

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- Training on the basics of the scrutiny function for members of the Scrutiny Committee, delivered by an external facilitator
 - Training sessions held before Finance and Administration Committee meetings, delivered by a representative from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (Cipfa)
 - A member of the Development Control Committee attending a master planning workshop and two further members attending a Politicians in Planning Conference
 - Workshops for all members of the Development Control Committee prior to meetings to update members on changes to planning law or developments in the planning field, including planning conditions, energy efficiency and disability access
 - A strategic housing event last Autumn, facilitated and sponsored by the IDeA
 - An Effective Audit Committee course run by an external facilitator attended by two members of the Performance Select Committee
 - Equalities training for senior members
 - Workshops on key council policy decisions organised and run by senior council officers for all members
- 11 There is a formal member development programmes available, developed by the IDeA and the nine Regional Employers Organisations.
- 12 Councils that are signed up to the charter must provide an action plan based on:
- being fully committed to developing elected members in order to achieve the council's aims and objectives
 - adopting a member-led strategic approach to member development
 - having a member learning and development plan in place that clearly identifies the difference development activities will make
 - seeing that learning and development is effective in building capacity
 - addressing wider development matters to promote work-life balance and citizenship

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- 13 Following a self assessment and the further work that then comes from that, the authority would then have an on-site assessment carried out by a small team of elected members and/or officers before charter status is awarded
- 14 Of the 54 councils in the East of England region, 30 are signed up to the charter, and of those 30, nine have been awarded it.
- 15 Information about the charter can be viewed by committee members prior to the meeting at www.idea.gov.uk – type member development into the search engine on the home page.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That members do not receive the on-going training necessary in order to be effective in their roles	2 – Although relevant officers are aware of the need to identify necessary training, there is no overarching corporate approach	2 – The council benefits from many members with extensive experience, limiting any impact	Review of the agreed process attached to the report to ensure it is appropriate Strategic Management Board to consider whether the current approach to member training requires refinement

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.