

# **Report to Constitution and Members' Services Standing Scrutiny Panel**

**Date of meeting: 12 January 2009**



**Portfolio:** Leader

**Subject:** Member Training Programme 2009/10

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## **Recommendations:**

- (1) To consider the comments made by Councillors on the member training programme for 2009/10;**
- (2) To consider arrangements for Member Induction in May 2009 bearing in mind that there may be a limited number of new District Councillors;**
- (3) To consider the following:**
  - (a) courses to be discontinued;**
  - (b) skills training arrangements/awareness sessions.**
- (4) To review courses to be mandatory;**
- (5) To consider the submissions made to East of England Regional Assembly regarding member training up to 31 March 2009**
- (6) To receive details of the ID&EA member development charter**

## **Report:**

1. This report deals with the member training programme for 2009/10. The following documents are enclosed:

- ... (a) the summary programme for 2008/09 (Appendix 1);
- ... (b) course attendances during 2008/09 (Appendix 2);
- ... (c) consultation submissions by Councillors (Appendix 3); and
- (d) list of EERA courses (Appendix 4)

## **2. Officer Commentary**

### **2.1 Planning**

It is suggested that the three planning courses be retained in the programme. The Director of

Planning and Economic Development plans a programme comprising:

- (a) Introduction;
- (b) Planning Appeals/Other Current Issues
- (c) Forward Planning (June 2008) – Local Development Framework, East of England Plan Implications.

In 2008/09 a separate course on Section 106 Agreements was held (M15) and seems to have been well received.

## **2.2 Finance**

In 2008/9, a course (M8) was held on Finance/Audit and Governance Committee. The Panel should consider whether a course on the budget and local government finance should be held in 2009/10. In recent years, the Council has used an external trainer which has been well received but is expensive. The existence of an ongoing training programme on finance, audit and governance.

## **2.3 Information Technology (ICT)**

It is proposed to repeat the introductory ICT courses for members (M2) and the "Platinum" training (M3) on the COMS system. This is to cover those members who have not received training and those who would appreciate a refresher course. If there are any other ICT needs to be addressed the Panel should be quite specific.

## **2.4 Service Awareness Sessions**

In the 2008/9 programme, two service awareness sessions were held on the Safer, Cleaner, Greener initiative (M16) and on Emergency Planning (M13). The latter involved Parish and Town Councils and partner agencies. The Panel should consider whether a course on this subject should be held in 2009/10 following those held in 2007/08 and this year and which others are desirable.

## **2.5 Induction**

In 2009/10 there are no planned District Elections. The Panel may wish to consider whether this "slot" in the training programme should be utilised differently next year.

## **2.6 Personal Skills/Awareness Courses**

The Panel may wish to review the following courses from 2008/9 and express views on whether they should continue:

- (a) Dealing with Difficult People etc (M14)
- (b) Equalities and Diversity (M17)
- (c) Effective Reading, Chairmanship, Questioning, Making a Presentation and Public Speaking (M20)\*
- (d) Freedom of Information/Data Protection (M19)
- (e) Media Skills - Front of Camera (M12)\*\*

\*This course is to be provided by the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA). The Plan is that these sessions could be provided in a different format, namely one whole day session in the three modules which would allow members to opt in without staying for the whole day.

The course would not be of the same depth as a whole day session but could allow more detailed courses to be held if demand is established.

\*\*Course M12 was held for the first time in 2008/9 and was designed to enhance the skills of members in an era of webcasting. These courses are expensive but the Panel should consider whether training in this media skill or others is required next year.

## 2.7 Overview and Scrutiny – Review

An informal review is underway at present. Does the Panel wish to programme a further session in 2009/10?

## 2.8 Remaining Courses

It is suggested that M5 (Code of Conduct), M7 (Planning Protocol), M9 (Housing Appeals), M22 (Staff Appeals) and M23 (Complaints) should be retained.

## 2.9 Mandatory Courses

Does the Panel wish to review those courses which should be regarded as mandatory either for all councillors or categories? The proposal agreed last year is set out below:

Subject	Mandatory For
All Planning Courses	All Members of the Council who serve on Area Plans Sub-Committees
Code of Conduct	All members
Planning Protocol	All members
ICT/COMs	All members
Licensing Committee	Licensing Committee members
Housing Appeals/Staff Appeals/Complaints	Panel members

**2.10** Members asked that those courses such as Licensing etc which were designed specifically for those members who had been appointed to those bodies should nevertheless be available to other members for information and general background knowledge. As to monitoring attendance, the Panel saw this role as being a matter for the political groups and their headers.

## 2.11 East of England Assembly – Support & Training

The East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) has recently notified the Council of new funding for officer and member support and training up to 31.12.09. This funding was notified late in the day with a deadline of 24.12.08 for provisional submissions as to how the funding will be used for officers and members. With this in mind, the funding has been divided between members and officers and EERA was advised that the Council could utilise the funding for the following courses :

- (a) Presentation Skills (officer and members)
- (b) Public Speaking (officers and members)
- (c) Speed Reading (officers or members)
- (d) Leading Change Management (members and officers)
- (e) Surviving Change (officers)

- 2.12** Although this bid had to be submitted before this meeting, it is hoped that now the Council has registered its interest there will be scope to negotiate on any preferences expressed at this meeting. The Panel will note that Course M20, which is to be given by EERA, covers some of this ground and there may be an opportunity to seek funding for that course from these resources. Further details are given in enclosed appendices (4) – (6)
- 2.13** Reference will also be made to the IDEA Member Development Charter.
- 3. Budget**
- 3.1** The final budget for 2009/10 has not been finalised at the time of writing but is expected to be around £13,000 (excluding EERA funding).