

# **Report to the Constitution and Member Services Standing Scrutiny Panel**



**Date of meeting:** 11 January 2010

**Portfolio:** Leader

**Subject:** Member Training Programme 2010/11

**Responsible Officer:** Ian Willett (01992 56 4243)

**Democratic Services Officer:** Mark Jenkins (01992 56 4607)

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## **Recommendations:**

- (1) To receive a preliminary report on the outcome of the presentation to members on 17 December 2009 concerning a new approach to member training and development;
- (2) To note that personal development interviews with Councillors who have put themselves forward will be held on 11, 12 and 14 January 2010 with the consultant from IDeA;
- (3) That the outcome of the personal development interviews is expected to be:
  - (a) a situation report on members' training needs for the authority;
  - (b) an action plan based on member development charter requirements; and
- (4) To note that steps are being taken to develop a training course for candidates or prospective candidates for District Council elections in time for the March 2009 meeting, further details of which are given in this report; and
- (5) That further work be undertaken on the member training and development programme for next year once the report of the Consultant is to hand but that in the meantime certain training courses (e.g. planning, code of conduct, planning protocol etc) be covered in the outline programme which will be submitted to the next meeting of the Panel.

## **Report:**

### **1. Introduction**

1.1 The work programme for the Scrutiny Panel specifies that at this meeting, consideration should be given to the member training programme for next year. However, because a new approach is being attempted in relation to member training, the main details of the proposed programme will not be available until the Panel's meeting in March.

1.2 The purpose of this report is to update the Panel on recent developments with a view to detailed consideration being given to the training programme at the next meeting.

### **2. Personal Development Interviews**

2.1 Two consultants working with IDeA visited the Council on 17 December 2009 and

gave a presentation on the IDeA charter approach to member training and development. The presentations were given by an IDeA consultant from Kent County Council who is also a Cabinet member with that authority and an IDeA consultant who has been engaged on a temporary basis, at no cost, to assist the Council in moving towards a new basis on which member training needs are determined. This latter consultant will be involved in individual member development interviews for those Councillors wishing to take part.

2.2 The consultant has agreed three complete days for personal development interviews with members. These are 11, 12 and 14 January 2010 and at the session on 17 December, it was hoped that a number of members would volunteer to take part. This work is being undertaken at no cost to the Council as resources are being provided through the East of England Regional Assembly..

2.3 The outcome of the presentation and the personal interviews will hopefully be an action plan on how the Council can progress its member training and development arrangements and some indications from those members who are interviewed of the kind of development needs being sought for the training programme. It is obvious that the more members participate in the personal interviews the better grasp the authority will have as to what should be included. However, certain courses can be taken as read; e.g. Code of Conduct, member induction, the various planning training courses, Planning Protocol and Finance training. Work will proceed in order to find dates for those sessions and these can then be integrated with those which arise from the personal development interviews.

2.4. It is anticipated that an increasing feature of the member training and development arrangements will be more one to one support for members where sought. This might include individual mentoring This is an aspect of training which has been underplayed within the Council but can offer real benefits to members who will respond to this kind of approach. Likewise various types of e-training can also be relevant to members who prefer that method.

### **3. Budgets and Organisation of the Programme**

3.1 The training budget for 2009/10 totals £13,000. However, as a result of contacts with the East of England Regional Assembly additional funding has been made available both on member and officer training. With this in mind, that budget is likely to be underspent in the current year and it is planned to carry forward the budget at that level, namely £8,000 for the year as part of the savings plan being sought by the Cabinet..

3.2 As a response, it is planned to try to integrate member and officer training much more than hitherto which will result in members and officers attending the same courses. This in turn will avoid duplication of resources and gain better value for money out of existing budgets. By the same token the Council is actively participating in various Essex-based networks dealing with HR and training issues. It is hoped that this may result in more collaborative courses between different Councils which will once again save costs.

### **4. Candidates' Training**

4.1 Last year members asked for a session to be included in the member training programme relating to candidates. The feeling was that potential candidates or actual candidates may have a better idea what to expect if they are elected, thus making their transition into the role of Councillor easier to achieve. There is another school of thought which says that candidates could easily be put off when they realise the scope of their responsibilities and the time commitment that this would entail.

4.2 A consultancy has been found that has experience in running such courses and arrangements have been made for one course to be held on Saturday 20 March 2009 at the Council Offices, Epping at which all candidates will be invited to attend. It will be appreciated that this is a new venture for the Council and does require a degree of support from Group Leaders and the local political parties. The event could be advertised more widely through the media in order to attract those candidates who are independent of the political group. A reserve date of 6 March 2009 has also been put aside in case the demand for the event proves greater than anticipated.

4.3 A copy of the course programme is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. There have been representations about the course being too long at one day and it is planned to reduce it to a half day or thereabouts. The programme is therefore submitted as a guide only.

**Resource Implications:**

To be met from existing budgets and external funding.in 2009/10.

**Legal and Governance Implications:**

None.

**Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

None.

**Consultation Undertaken:**

Group Leaders and independent members.

**Impact Assessment:**

Risk Management

There are no identifiable risks in a fully trained Council. There are potential risks that some potential candidates or actual candidates may not seek to stand for election if they attend a training course specifically designed for them. By the same token, some of those who are undecided may decide to opt in.

Equality and Diversity:

Did the initial assessment of the proposals contained in this report for relevance to the Council's general equality duties, reveal any potentially adverse equality implications? No

Where equality implications were identified through the initial assessment process, has a formal Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? No

What equality implications were identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process?  
N/A.

N/A

How have the equality implications identified through the Equality Impact Assessment been addressed in this report in order to avoid discrimination against any particular group?

All training will be provided irrespective of political affiliation or the lack of them.

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