report

Nottinghamshire County Council

meeting	Administration Committee		
date	28th April 2010	agenda item number	**7**

REPORT OF SERVICE MANAGER (MEMBER SUPPORT)

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

1. **Purpose of the Report**

1.1   To review member development over the last two years and propose a way forward.

2. **Background**

2.1   Councillors have a very complex and multi-faceted role. Expectations of councillors are high and the demands on them are increasing. They bring a range of skills, knowledge and experience which enriches the work of the Council and enables it to be a democratic organisation.

2.2   The Councillors Commission notes that the range of skills required by councillors is perhaps broader than it used to be, covering both a very astute strategic sense and sound political judgement to bring to decision making, especially for executive councillors, as well as more local sensitivities and softer communication skills.

2.3   The Commission goes on to recommend that Councillors must be adequately supported. This ranges from practical support from officers, administrative staff and IT to individual developmental support and tailored learning. The Commission reports that the "demands of suddenly finding oneself a councillor can be daunting, and good induction training is a vital starting point". This then needs to extend into ongoing training and development. Given the importance the Commission attaches to training and development is paramount, the majority of Commissioners propose that there should be an expectation that councillors will take advantage of opportunities offered to them.

3. **Member Development 2008/9**

3.1   The approach to Member Development in 2008/9 (ie the year prior to the election) was based on the responses to a survey of member development needs. The main parts of the programme offered in 2008/9 were as follows.

a) A series of training days reserved in the Council Diary where opportunities were provided for all members. Areas covered included:

- Member and Officer relations
- Confident Speaking
- Local Determination of Code of Conduct issues
- Introduction to Local Government Finance
- Arrangements for the 2009 elections

b) A range of courses which were identified as meeting the needs highlighted in the survey. This was presented as an "individual choice" programme with members able to nominate themselves for up to four events. The programme covered:

- IT skills (basic and advanced)
- Project Management
- Planning ahead for retirement
- Planning
- Community Involvement and Community Leadership
- Financial Management

3.2   Some 53 members (including Independent Members) attended activities through the programme.

4.   **Member Development 2009/10**

4.1   The main emphasis for member development in 2009/10 was on an induction programme. The programme was primarily aimed at new members but was also available for returning members. The details of the programme delivered are in the Appendix.

4.2   In discussion before the election, the then leaders of the three groups on the Council suggested that previous induction programmes had been too intensive and too early for new members. Consequently the programme was designed to provide the essential information before the recess with more extensive sessions in the autumn.

5.   **Proposed Approach**

5.1   **Strategic Oversight**. Councillor Development needs to reflect the Council's strategic direction as well as the specific needs of individual members. It is proposed to establish a Member Reference Group to take a close oversight of the development programme. The Reference Group would be responsible for:

a) Setting the overall strategic priorities for the member development programme

b) Reviewing the range of individual needs and approving development activities for individual members.

5.2 **Identifying Individual Development Needs**. This approach is based on members being responsible for identifying their individual development needs and the Council making arrangements to meet them (subject to the strategic oversight set out above). It is proposed to identify these needs through individual directed conversations between members and officers from the member support team. These conversations will lead to individual Personal Development Plans.

5.3 **Delivering the programme**. It is proposed to continue the arrangements whereby the Member Support Team sources appropriate development to meet the identified needs. These activities will include events open to all members, members accessing in-house training or external training events.

5.4 It is proposed to continue the previous practice of enabling members to access up to 4 individual events a year.

5.5 **Evaluation**. Members attending conferences etc are required to provide a report back on the main learning points and an assessment of the value of the event. Similarly, members are asked to complete feedback forms after other training. In addition, the directed conversations with members will provide a further opportunity to assess development activities and evaluate their impact.

6. **RECOMMENDED**

It is recommended that

I. The Member Development Programmes delivered in 2008/9 and 2009/10 be noted

II. The approach to councillor development set out in the report be adopted

III. A Member Reference Group consisting of the Deputy Leader, Conservative Group Business Manager, and a representative of each of the other three political groups be established

David Ellis
Service Manager (Member Support)

Service Director (Finance) Comments

The budget for Member Development in 2010/11 is £45,000. The cost of the programme will have to be contained within this budget. (MB 31/03/10)

Legal Services Comments (SLB 31/03/2010)

By virtue of paragraph 10 of Part 3 of the Council's Constitution Administration Committee is responsible for approving expenditure incurred for the purposes of Member attendance at training courses and for other matters relating to training reserved to it under the Member Training Policy. It is the appropriate body for dealing with the content of this report.

Background Papers Available for Inspection

Nil

Electoral Divisions Affected

All

MEMBER INDUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2009/10

Date	Title	Target Audience (all events open to all members)	Purpose/Content	Number Attended
5th, 8th, 9th June	Welcome	All Members	Distribution of welcome pack (with pay forms, declaration of interest) Members Handbook etc. Signing of declaration of acceptance of office.	67 members
10th June onwards	Constitution, Code of Practice	All new Members	Briefing from the Monitoring Officer on Code of Conduct etc	27 members
8th June Onwards	Introduction to IT	New Members, or returning members as a refresher	1:1 discussion with all members on their IT needs, introduction to e-mail system, and County Council's IT Network	
25th June	Financial Management	All new Members	Introduction to Local Government Finance; plus a session on the pension scheme	17 members
30th June	Introduction to Planning	Members of Planning and Licensing Committee	Initial briefing for members appointed to Planning and Licensing on the law and their responsibilities	8 members
8th July	Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting	All new Members	Briefing on members roles in respect of the Council's responsibilities as a corporate parent and what to do if safeguarding concerns are reported to them as local members	8 members
10th July	Appeals Committee	Members of Appeals Committee	Initial briefing for members appointed to the Appeals Committee on their roles and responsibilities	9 members
14th July repeated 23rd July	Introduction to Scrutiny	Members of Overview and Scrutiny	Introduction to scrutiny, changes to legislation, good practice in scrutiny, identifying areas for review	20 members 2 co-optees 5 Officers
8th September	Employment Appeals	Members of Appeals Committee	More in-depth consideration of roles and responsibilities of members of Appeals Committee	
7th October	Footpaths and Rights of Way	Members of Rights of Way Committee	Full-day workshop on the relevant legislation and member responsibilities in decision-making	16 members 8 officers
12th October	Planning and Licensing	Members of Planning and Licensing Committee	Mandatory training for members of the committee on the planning context, key aspects of the legislation and role of members in decision-making	11 Members 8 Officers
19th October	Performance	All new Members	Principles of performance management and role in holding departments to account	12 Members
9th November	Health and Safety	All new Members	How Council deals with Health and Safety issues. Briefing on personal safety for members	
16th November	Emergency Management	All new Members	County Council's responsibilities in Emergency Management, control structures, Member's roles, significant risks.	

In addition to this programme specific media training was arranged for members of the Cabinet and a workshop was arranged for the Labour Group on Being an Effective Opposition