



Democratic Renewal Panel 10 September 2009

Member Development: Update

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Member Development programme for the remainder of the municipal year, support for Member Development activity within the Council and an update on the plan to maintain the award of the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) Elected Member Development Charter.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the revised programme for the remainder of the year.
- 2.2 To note that in future support for the Member Development activity overseen by the Panel will be provided by the Democratic Services team.
- 2.3 To note the updated action plan for re-accreditation of the Elected Member Development Charter.

3. Support for Member Development and an update on the programme for the year

- 3.1 Unfortunately, a number of development activities in the early part of the programme have not taken place, either as a result of the limited numbers of Councillors booking places meaning it was not viable to run the sessions, or because of a delay in sourcing suitable external trainers to provide the skills workshops to be provided in-house but with external facilitation. This is not to say that there has been no development activity. A number of Councillors have attended relevant external courses, such as the recent EERA courses providing introductions to Comprehensive Area Assessment and Equality Framework.
- 3.2 The capacity issue has been addressed via the changes resulting from the alterations made to the management structure. It had been the intention that the Electoral Services Manager who took up post in late January 2009 should take on the role of supporting Member Development activity. However it was impractical for that role to be taken on until after the June 2009 combined County and European Parliamentary elections. In the course of changes made as a result of the management restructure it has been agreed that future support will be provided by the Democratic Services team. This will tie development activity in with the other support the team provides to Members and is a logical home for the function. Administrative support for internal

courses and bookings for external courses will continue to be provided by Alison Wright.

- 3.3 External providers of practical workshops in Chiring Meetings, Public Speaking and Analytical Skills, the three skill areas which were most frequently highlighted on the Member Development Request councillors completed at the start of the year, have been sourced. Impact Training, which has previously provided well-received workshops on Presentation Skills, has been selected and the sessions will run as indicated on the revised programme attached as Appendix 1. A provider for media training, initially for Cabinet members, has also been identified and the Corporate Communications Manager will be working with the provider to ensure the course provided is suitably tailored to the local circumstances in St Edmundsbury. Cabinet will be canvassed for a suitable date for this session.
- 3.4 Members of the Panel are asked to note the revised programme and the arrangements for future support for the Panel.

4. Update on the action plan to retain Elected Member Development Charter status

- 4.1 The Charter was awarded to the Council in March 2007 for a period of three years, meaning reassessment is due in March 2010. Following the award the Panel approved an action plan to address the issues identified in the assessors' report. Eighteen months into the assessment period, ie last autumn, there was an interim visit from a single assessor who met with the Chairman of the Panel and the lead support officer for Member Development. The purpose of the meeting was to check that the authority was on course to retain the charter. The visit was successful and resulted in the authority receiving a letter stating *"... that the Council is continuing to meet the requirements of the Charter Standard. The Council is meeting all the key targets agreed between the Council and South East Employers (on behalf of EERA)."* The summary of activity provided to the assessor at that interim meeting is attached as background information at Appendix 2.
- 4.2 Since that visit the Panel have overseen the revision of what is now called the Member Development Request form, and the issuing of the Member Development Record folder which provides Councillors with one place in which to retain notes from courses, hold copies of Councillor role descriptions and keep track of development activity, both formal and informal. Attached at Appendix 3 is an updated version of the action plan showing these additional activities.
- 4.3 The Panel is asked to note the updated Action Plan and indicate if there are any additional actions which it wishes the Democratic Services team to take forward to support the application for reaccreditation.

For further information contact:-

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Revised Member Development Programme for 2009/2010

All sessions start at 5pm and take place in Room 13 on the Ground Floor of West Suffolk House.

2009

- 23 Sept Local Government Finance – All the questions you ever wanted to ask about local government finance but never dared. Led by Liz Watts, Chief Finance Officer
- 29 Oct Chairing Meetings – a practical skills workshop led by a facilitator provided by Impact Training
- 24 Nov Public Speaking – a practical skills workshop led by a facilitator provided by Impact Training practical
- 14 Dec Planning Enforcement – led by Patsy Dell, Head of Planning and Economic Development, and enforcement staff

2010

- 26 Jan Analytical Skills – a practical skills workshop led by a facilitator provided by Impact Training
- 25 Feb Partnership working/Community Leadership – an internal workshop facilitated by staff
- 29 Mar TBC Presentation Skills – a practical workshop or other requirements

IT training to be provided on days when the trainer is already on the premises and to include a session on Effective use of E-mail.

Summary of activity since the EERA Elected Member Development Charter assessment: Information provided at the 18 month informal assessment

May 2007

In May 2007 the Council had whole council elections. These resulted in an intake of 17 new councillors.

A full induction programme was provided (details of which were circulated in the nomination packs for the Borough elections) and to all successful candidates.

All Councillors were issued with an updated Councillor Handbook in hard copy and an electronic copy was included on the Members' Corner of the Council's intranet site.

New Councillors were assigned an "Officer Contact", essentially a buddy to help them navigate their way around the organisation.

July 2007

At its meeting on 5 July the Democratic Renewal Panel (DRP) received a report on attendance at the induction events held to date. The Panel also received the Assessors report following the award of the Charter and agreed a plan of actions to address issues identified in the assessment report.

Following the meeting the Member Development Policy was placed on the Members' Corner of the Council intranet site.

August 2007

Contact made with Building Capacity East to secure funding for IDeA Peer Mentoring for the three new members of the Cabinet.

September 2007

Report to the DRP outlining Member Development activity to date. The Panel also considered a document which, in line with the assessment report for the Charter, brought together in one document a summary of St Edmundsbury Borough Council's strategic approach to Member Development. The same meeting of the Panel also received a demonstration of Learning Pool, an e-learning facility to which the Council had been provided with a subscription through Building Capacity East. The Cabinet and Electoral Services Manager was asked to launch this facility by providing a demonstration at the start of both the main Scrutiny committee meetings and this was subsequently done.

November 2007

Report to DRP on improving the element of challenge within the Member Development Plan Process. The new offer of a meeting with either a senior councillor or a senior officer was implemented for the circulation of development plans at the start of 2008.

January 2008

Member Development Plans circulated along with the offer of either a meeting to work through the development plan. Councillors were also surveyed on their preferred time and length of training events

February 2008

The Panel considered the initial results from the development plan process and also reviewed Member Development activity over the 2007-2008 programme. The initial outline of a programme for 2008-2009 was considered.

March 2008

The DRP received a report providing a worked-up draft of the Member Development programme for 2008-2009. The report also included the results of surveys of Councillors to establish their preferred time and length of development events and, where applicable, their experience of the "Officer Contact" scheme which had run until the end of 2007. The report also outlined how a Member Development Record, or portfolio, could be produced and officers were asked to further develop this idea.

April 2008

The Member Development Programme for 2008-2009 was circulated in hard copy and via the Members' Bulletin.

June 2008

The DRP received a further report developing the concept form a Member Development Record/Portfolio. Taking account of the debate and feedback at the meeting a mock-up of the portfolio has been prepared and one will be distributed to each Councillor in January 2009 when Member Development Plans and accompanying documentation are next circulated.

September 2008

Although the DRP did not receive a report on Member Development at this meeting of the Panel it did discuss the challenges of attracting Members to development events and engaging them in completing Development Plans. Two members of the Panel volunteered to work with officers to refresh the Member Development Plan documentation with a view to making it more accessible to all Councillors. A need to re-launch the Learning Pool system was also identified.

October 2008

Following internal staff changes the Council is preparing to advertise for a new Electoral Services Manager, who will also have responsibility for Member Development. This change should result in more officer time being available to provide support to the DRP on Member Development activities. The current post-holder has progressed to a new role but will manage the Electoral Services post so there will be continuity.

Through-out the last 18 months Members have been kept up to date with development opportunities via entries in the weekly Members' Bulletin which is sent electronically to all Councillors each Friday.

Action Plan originally approved by the Panel in July 2007, updated

EERA report suggestion	Possible Action	Due date
a) Proactively make the Member Development Policy available to members to ensure every councillor is aware of its existence, and in particular ensure all councillors have a copy of the policy	<p>Policy already circulated with nomination papers, although it is recognised that not all agents forwarded them to their candidates.</p> <p>Place a copy of the Member Development Policy and the programme for the remainder of the year in the Members' Corner on the intranet (alongside copies of the other policies and documents referred to in the Councillors' Handbook). Circulate a hard copy of the policy at the beginning of next year when Member Development Plans are next circulated and reiterate that completing a plan is the opportunity each councillor has to contribute to identifying the top collective development needs which will be addressed in-house.</p>	<p>End July ✓</p> <p>Jan 2008 ✓</p>
b) Produce one document which summarises the Council's strategic approach to member development.	<p>Officers to bring to the next meeting for discussion a draft document summarising the existing strategic approach to member development which.</p> <p>Once agreed and approved by Full Council place this document on the intranet.</p>	<p>Sept 07 ✓</p> <p>Oct 07 ✓</p>
c) Providing greater detail of actions, dates, deadlines and responsibilities when doing development planning	<p>Officers to explore with the assessment team exactly what type of additional information they feel is necessary and why and bring that information to the next meeting for discussion.</p> <p>Depending on the discussion in September officers to include that level of detail when drafting the programme for the municipal year 2008/2009 for discussion by the Panel in February/March.</p>	<p>Sept 07</p> <p>Mar 08</p>
d) Develop on-line pages bringing together all the relevant documents and also provide these in hard copy to councillors	<p>In the short-term use to be made of the existing intranet as a means of making documents associated with member Development accessible to all councillors. When the intranet is redeveloped to discuss with the team responsible how a Member Development page could be developed.</p> <p><i>At the meeting on 5 July the Panel discussed this suggestion but felt it did not want to revert to providing hard copies of document as a matter of course. Information is available in the Members' Corner area of the intranet. Hard copies of the Member Development policy were circulated in January 2008 alongside the Member Development Plan and, in August 2009, core basic information was again provided in hard copy as part of the Member Development Record folder circulated to all councillors.</i></p>	<p>As detailed in individual actions</p>

<p>e) Consider ways in which to provide a (constructive) challenge to Members during the development plan process</p>	<p>Officers to bring a report on the ways in which this could be achieved to the Panel after all councillors have gone through the process at the start of 2008, with a view to instigating any changes for the 2009 round of development plans.</p> <p><i>Changes introduced in January 2008 provided all councillors with the opportunity to request a meeting with either a senior councillor or senior officer to work through the Member Development Plan. Four members formally took advantage of this facility which was also available in January 2009 when the Member Development Request form was circulated.</i></p>	<p>Mar 08 Jan 09 ✓</p>
<p>f) Consider the accessibility of the existing member development programme with reference to the timing and location of activities, and the introduction of greater use of on-line facilities.</p>	<p>When development plans are circulated again at the start of 2008 to re-survey councillors about the optimum time for the majority for development events. Where there is a high collective demand for a particular type of development event to explore whether more than one event can be offered providing a choice of times, or if closer working with neighbouring authorities would be another way of providing choice over dates to attend events. To bring the results back to the Panel in February/March to consider when setting the programme for the next year.</p>	<p>Jan 08 ✓ Mar 08 ✓</p>
<p>g) Complement traditional delivery with technology based approaches.</p>	<p>Make full use of the Learning Pool on-line learning facilities as the various modules are developed. Demonstrate the material available to panel members at the autumn meeting and agree a method of launching the service to all councillors.</p> <p><i>The Panel agreed that the Learning Pool facility should be launched through the provision of demonstrations of the system at the start of the two main scrutiny meetings, followed by the instructions for logging on being circulated to all councillors.</i></p> <p><i>NB the subscription, which was funded by Building Capacity East, has now lapsed</i></p>	<p>Sept 08 <i>Completed autumn 08</i> ✓</p>

In addition to this plan the Democratic Renewal Panel have also overseen

- 1) *The revision of the Member Development Plan to produce a single-sided Member Development Request form which was introduced in January 2009.*
- 2) *The creation of a Member Development Record folder which was issued to all Councillors in August 2009. It contained a copy of that councillor's Member Development Request form (where completed), the role description for frontline councillor and any other committee roles the councillor holds and a sheet to record development activity, whether formal or informal and wherever undertaken or gained.*