

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>MEMBER DEVELOPMENT UPDATE</b>
<b>DIRECTORATE:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>CAROLYN WHEATER – ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (LEGAL AND CORPORATE SUPPORT SERVICES)</b>

## **1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 To provide members with an update on the delivery of member development within the Council. The Council is committed to developing its councillors to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to carry out their roles in the most effective manner. The member development programme is a key part of this process, and this report provides a summary of the current position for members' consideration. It also provides an opportunity for members to directly feed into and shape the member development process.

## **2. 2014/15 Summary**

2.1 In addition to the new member induction programme, for the year to date the following member development or briefing events have been held:

- Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy and Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Police Act 2014 briefing
- Car Parking Strategy workshop
- Local Government Finance training
- Audit Committee training
- Licensing Act 2003 training
- Safeguarding briefing
- Licensing Committee training
- Planning Committee training

2.2 Training will also be delivered on media and presentation skills in the coming months and is likely to be targeted towards those members who are most likely to interact with the media in an official capacity. Any further training will be delivered in response to emerging priorities or requests from members. As ever, committee members are invited to discuss any proposals for training or development which would be of benefit to themselves or other councillors.

2.3 As has been the case in previous years, newly-elected members have been offered the opportunity to complete a personal development plan either with officers or fellow councillors. This plan gives a number of different options for potential future development as well as the freedom to suggest training which would be beneficial for individual members. Wherever possible, any development opportunities will be offered to as many councillors as feasible.

### 3. Webinars

- 3.1 Members have recently expressed an interest in the potential for training to be delivered via 'webinars'. A webinar is a form of training or meeting which allows participants to see and hear content over the internet. It also usually allows participants to contribute to the event either through a telephone conference call or a computer microphone.
- 3.2 For more information regarding how webinars operate, members may wish to view the following videos. The first (<http://youtu.be/Gz2wBT9gZfo>) gives a brief summary of how a webinar operates, while the second (<http://youtu.be/vJr8GdEEFL8>) is a recording of a webinar already undertaken
- 3.3 In recent years it has become more common for external training providers to offer training via webinars. However, the majority of opportunities for this remain within professional training aimed at officers. Indeed, webinars for councillors from third-party trainers remain very much the exception rather than the rule. As such, any provision of webinars would need to be delivered directly by the Council, rather than relying upon training companies or consultants.
- 3.4 Usage of webinars within local government for member training remains uncommon. Attempts have been made to seek feedback from other local authorities regarding their experiences in this area, although the response to date has been extremely limited.
- 3.5 If members were minded to progress with webinar-style training, a dedicated commercial web broadcasting platform is likely to be considerably more expensive than the Council's limited usage would justify. Instead consideration could be given to using a more limited free platform such as Skype. Using either a tablet computer or a laptop the Council would be able to broadcast a video conference call to up to 10 people. Councillors could then use tablet computers to access the online broadcast and interact with the trainer.
- 3.6 A further alternative to webinars which might broaden the reach of member development events would be to make video recordings of events. These recordings could then be shared either on DVD or via online video streaming (in the same form as commercial services such as YouTube). This would have the advantage of councillors being able to benefit from training at a time which is convenient for them. There would also be the opportunity to develop a library of recordings that would particularly benefit new councillors.
- 3.7 The principal disadvantages of recording training events would be the cost of equipment and the amount of officer time required to set-up and process recordings. If there were significant demand from councillors for this to be carried out it is likely that this could be justified based upon the increased reach of training events from which councillors might otherwise not benefit. Some external training providers might also be unwilling to have their sessions recorded in order to protect their future revenue and image rights.

It is also worth noting that many of the topics on which training and information briefings are delivered can cease to be relevant in a relatively short space of time, often owing to changing legislation, case law, or processes.

- 3.8 Members may also recall that the Council has already made use of an online training platform for councillors. The broad reaction to this platform has suggested that members prefer a traditional training format, with usage remaining extremely low despite attempts to promote its availability. As such, officers have continued to focus on providing member development events which require councillors to attend in person.
- 3.9 Members are therefore requested to offer feedback on the advantages and disadvantages of webinars or training recordings, focussing in particular on whether councillors would be likely to take advantage of any relevant opportunities.

#### **4. Organisational Impacts**

##### **4.1 Finance**

Any suggested changes to the delivery of or support for member development must be funded from within its existing budget.

##### **4.2 Legal Implications**

None.

#### **5. Recommendation**

- 5.1 That members note the current status of member development.
- 5.2 That members offer feedback regarding the options for the recording or live web-broadcasting of member development events.
- 5.3 That members provide feedback on the operation of member development, including any specific guidance on the training areas to be delivered during 2013/14 and for the new municipal year.