

<b>Date:</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> July</b>
<b>Classification:</b>	<b>General Release</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Member Development and Training</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Head of the Cabinet Secretariat</b>
<b>Cabinet Member Portfolio</b>	<b>Leader of the Council</b>
<b>Wards Involved:</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Policy Context:</b>	<b>Training and Development of Members</b>
<b>Financial Summary:</b>	<b>n/a</b>
<b>Report Author and Contact Details:</b>	<b>Mark Ewbank x2636 Policy &amp; Scrutiny Manager <a href="mailto:mewbank@westminster.gov.uk">mewbank@westminster.gov.uk</a></b>
	<b>Janis Best x3255 Member Services Manager <a href="mailto:jb主@westminster.gov.uk">jb主@westminster.gov.uk</a></b>

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 At the last meeting of the Westminster Scrutiny Commission, as a result of the session held with the Chairman of the Communities and Local Government Commons Select Committee, Cllr Barrie Taylor requested the inclusion of a paper on continuing training and development for Members of the Council. This paper reflects an indication of what could be provided should Members of the Commission consider it worthwhile.

## 2. Key Matters for the Commission's Consideration

- **To express preferences on the potential ideas for Member training and development in the future** (see paragraph 3.6)
- What level of training and development should be provided to Members as standard?
- What further support could be offered to Members in recognition of the variety of roles a councillor can perform?

- Should Member training and development be reactive or proactive according to need?

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 The Frontline Councillor report of the Commons CLG Select Committee reported that authorities should review the training they offered to ensure it met the needs of councillors. In particular, training should reflect the changing roles of councillors, and ensure that councillors understood the implications of the Localism Act 2011 and other legislation. However, it was thought that councillors themselves must ultimately be responsible for ensuring they have the skills they need to carry out their duties. They suggested that, as part of the performance reporting process, councillors should make public note of any training they had completed in the course of the preceding year. It was considered that training should be seen as a benefit, not a cost, to local taxpayers.
- 3.3 On the one hand, the Committee were encouraged that a number of councils had chosen to ring fence their Member development budgets; on the other hand, they were concerned by reports that the staffing to support this Member development was being reduced in a number of authorities. Despite budgetary constraint, the Committee considered it essential that there were sufficient resources to meet member development needs. It was considered that without training and development, councillors' effectiveness and job satisfaction would suffer.
- 3.4 The Committee considered that at a time when councillors were being called on to make increasingly difficult decisions about service reductions and budget priorities, this was not the moment to reduce their ability to undertake these vital tasks. Members thought that councillors had more need than ever for the support and resources to enable them to fulfil their decision-making and scrutiny roles.

### **Westminster Training and Development**

- 3.5 Opportunities for Elected Member training and development have been available as standard to all councillors for a number of years. The Council has a budget set aside specifically for Member development, which allows Members, on authorisation of their respective groups, to attend conferences, seminars and training events around the country. A number of councillors take up the offer of training and development, but often only through self-referral or identification of training or conferences that they consider would help them conduct their role(s) more effectively. As part of a commitment to new and continuing Members of the Council, the Member Services team, the Cabinet Secretariat and the Policy & Scrutiny team have developed a number of ideas for continuing training and development for Members over this new council term.

## **3.6 Options for Member Development and Training**

### **3.6.1 Quarterly Departmental Showcases**

Building on the success of the Member Induction sessions following the 2014 elections, it has been suggested that officers could organise sessions in the evening on the work of individual departments. These events would provide context and background on service areas and allow contacts to be made with relevant officers and information. The format of the events could be tailored to suit Members' needs, and they could be augmented with additional one-off 'tutorials' for Members on key issues.

### **3.6.2 Site Visits**

Under Policy and Scrutiny function, Members are often able to have site visits relating to issues within departmental portfolios. There are plans for the Housing, Finance and Customer Services P&S Committee to 'host' a number of site visits to the Housing Options Service (HOS), CityWest estate offices and the sites of Westminster's regeneration programme. These site visits would be open to any Member of the Council. The programme of site visits could be rolled out to other departments and allow councillors, throughout the year, to visit services, organisations or physical developments in a group.

Councillors can also attend the training which is offered to staff too. However, without easy access to the Wire, it may be an opportunity to highlight these opportunities in a different way.

### **3.6.3 Regular Newsletter to advise Members on Training and Development**

Officers could circulate regular updates to advise what conferences and seminars are available to Members, in an email or postal bulletin. Councillors can also attend the training which is offered to staff. However, without easy access to the Wire, it may be an opportunity to highlight these opportunities in a different way.

### **3.6.4 Member Development Champions**

A Member could be nominated to lead Member training and development, to help develop and work on a programme for councillors. From a councillor perspective, these opportunities would be more tailored according to need within the Council.

### **3.6.5 Training Audit**

Members, themselves, often arrive as councillors with many years of skills and experience in the private, public and third sectors. If Members could share what skills and experiences they have in training and developing other Members, it would be an effective, understandable and cost neutral approach to training and development.

### **3.6.6 Planned Development Programme**

If more formality would be required, Member Services, Cabinet Secretariat and Policy & Scrutiny could draw up a draft training and development plan for Members to opt into during the year.

**If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers please contact Mark Ewbank x2636 [mewbank@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:mewbank@westminster.gov.uk) or Janis Best x3255 [jbest@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:jbest@westminster.gov.uk)**

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None