

Personnel and Training Services
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Report

Report subject : Councillor Training Plan 2006/07
Report to : Cabinet
Date : Wednesday 12 July 2006
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Deputy Cabinet Member for Resources: Councillor Mrs Willan

1.0 Background

At the meeting of 3rd May 2006, Cabinet considered the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel review of Members' Training and Development and it was agreed that a fully costed Members' Training Action Plan be drawn up, based on the findings of the review. The following report has therefore been drafted for Cabinet's consideration.

2.0 Actions for 2006/07

As outlined in the scrutiny report, the key areas of activity for 2006/07 are the following:

- The development of a modular training programme that makes use of CD Rom and other flexible methods of learning.
- The establishment of a training steering group.

A decision is also needed from Cabinet regarding the delivery of I.T training and support for members.

3.0 The development of a modular training programme that makes use of CD Rom and other flexible methods of learning.

See draft Training Programme attached as Appendix 1.

3.1 The Pre-induction and Induction Programme materials used during previous election periods will be utilised for the 2007 intake, subject to some review/ updating by Officers. Induction costs for the 2007 initial induction period will be covered by the 2007/ 08 budget.

3.2 A recent CPA review noted that take up of training among members of the council is patchy. The scrutiny review therefore investigated examples of best practice and surveyed all SDC members regarding their training preferences. It was identified that a move away from classroom-based sessions in favour of a training programme tailored to suit the individual was the preference. A draft training programme has therefore been compiled, with the aim of meeting the training needs of a new intake, whilst also allowing more experienced councillors to train in those areas where they feel that further development would be beneficial.



Awarded in:
Housing Services
Waste and Recycling Services



3.3 Although many supporting materials are in place, work is needed to develop these materials into a comprehensive reference manual, with supporting CD Rom material where appropriate, to create the Member's Induction/ Development Programme content (see **Appendix 1**). The modules within the proposed training programme cover the areas of training that are considered to be essential for a new councillor to undertake. A programme like this acknowledges the time constraints faced by most members and offers full flexibility in terms of delivery. It is hoped that the flexible learning materials for the **Community Leadership** module will be developed as part of joint working between the Wiltshire councils utilising Wiltshire Improvement Partnership (WIP) grant funding that is available. The remaining modules, **The Effective Councillor, Inside the Council, and Communication and Information** will be divided into sub-headings as detailed in the draft Training Programme and a Training pack for each sub-heading will be put together that can be sent out to councillors for them to complete as 'open learning'.

3.4 Budget

The one off costs associated with the production of a new training programme, along with yearly recurring costs associated with the members' training budget, are set out in the table below. In addition to an initial induction, there are a number of areas in which new councillors must be trained. Based on previous years' spend, the costs of delivering this training via an external facilitator are also included in the table to allow for a comparison between methods of training delivery. Training for new members has historically been delivered in classroom-based sessions by an external trainer, but it has often been difficult to secure a high turnout for these sessions, rendering some sessions particularly costly considering the limited needs met. The new training programme is therefore proposed as an invest to save measure, as the production of high quality materials at this point will significantly reduce the need for costly external training delivery and will ensure that all members can access training. It is expected that the new materials would be available for use for a number of years, and will be subject only to some minor updating to meet the needs of future intakes. Therefore, although investment at this stage represents a net increase in cost from traditional methods of delivering training, it is anticipated that over time a net saving will be seen, and it may even be possible to reduce the member training budget as a result of this saving (see recommendation contained in paragraph 3.6).

3.5 The scrutiny report recognised the initial investment needed to develop modular training packs and recommended that additional funding would be required in order to achieve this. Investment in members' training and development was largely suspended during 2005/06 pending the outcome of the scrutiny review, and £10,000 of the 2005/06 budget was not spent as a result. The scrutiny review therefore recommended that the £10,000 under-spend of the 2005/06 budget be carried over to allow for sufficient funds for materials to be produced during 2006/07. If Cabinet were to now approve this, it would now take the form of a supplementary estimate of £10,000. This is reflected in the recommendation set out in paragraph 3.6.

Action	Lead	Target Date	Cost
Develop Councillor Training Programme:			
Develop modular Training packs including e-learning to be delivered via CD Roms (see appendix 1) – approx. 10 modular areas to be developed into e-learning at a cost of £2,000 per module	Steve Milton/ Rachel Broome	By May 2007	£20,000 (one off cost)
Printing and design, cost of materials etc			£5,000 (one off cost)
External training/ annual recurring costs associated with the member's training budget eg. LGA subscription (based on last year's spend)			£10,000 (average annual recurring costs)
Total			£35,000

Previous post-election costs of inducting new intake:			£6,000
Net cost associated with producing new training programme (total production costs minus previous years' training costs):			£25,000 – £6,000 = £19,000
Budget available:			
In Members' Training budget			£25,000
Total (including supplementary estimate of £10,000)			£35,000
Total (excluding supplementary estimate of £10,000)			£25,000

3.6 Recommendation:

It is recommended that members agree to the production of new training materials along with a supplementary estimate of £10,000 to be added to the existing 2006/07 budget of £25,000 in order to allow for full production of training materials in preparation for the new intake in 2007, with the request that the members' training budget be subject to an annual review and a proposed annual reduction of £5,000 for the following two years in order to meet the initial £10,000 investment. (It is felt that this reduction will be possible owing to the lower costs of training which will be seen as a result of investment in new materials).

Benefits: High quality training materials would be produced to meet the needs of the new intake and those councillors who wish to train further in particular areas. The materials will allow for members to train in their own homes and at their own pace.

Materials will be in place long term and for use by future intakes.

Ultimately, it is likely that the council will save money through early investment.

Risks: A higher cost will be seen in the short term.

4.0 Training Steering Group:

In line with the findings of the scrutiny review, it is recommended that a cross party steering group be established, with the purpose of overseeing and guiding the member development / induction process. The establishment of a member training and development steering group is recognised as best practice, with the most successful approach being a cross party membership with Group Leaders also taking an overview of the work of the group. The scrutiny report noted the benefits and recommended that this would be an effective mechanism for ensuring member ownership of the programme, and would allow for a more formal monitoring of the councillor development process. The draft training plan, as attached at Appendix 1, is not definitive or in a finalised order at this stage, and it is recommended that one of the roles of the steering group be to review this plan and make any suggestions for changes. The steering group would also be able to establish a framework for one to one's to identify training needs for all members. The strength of the one to one approach was also highlighted by the scrutiny review. There are no costs associated with this proposed action.

A Member Development group is also to be established at a countywide level to oversee the development of the Community Leadership elements of the Wiltshire Improvement Partnership grant (see paragraph 2.3). It is envisaged that, if established, the district's representatives on the countywide group will be drawn from the SDC steering group for member development. It is important that the council has representation on the countywide steering group to ensure that input can be given into the formation of joint use learning materials.

4.1 Recommendation:

Agree to the formation of a cross party training steering group, with the role of overseeing training and development for members at the council and for Group Leaders to make nominations for membership of this group, with a view that these members will also represent the council on a county-wide steering group.

5.0 IT Support and Training:

The IT Support Officer employed during 2005/06 has had a dual role, covering IT support for councillors and helping to train councillors on IT applications. The officer has worked on a fixed term contract, working flexible hours spread over 30 hours a week. Detailed below is a summary of activities the IT Support Officer has undertaken in this time:

5.1 Total support

The IT Support Officer has predominantly supported councillors through one to one visits, with a total of 645 visits made over the 2005/06 period. Regular (weekly) one to ones have taken place with 23 councillors, and 22 have had occasional visits. Of these visits, the breakdown below details the activities that have taken place.

Technical support

Hardware

Resolving hardware issues, including resolving printer problems, internet service provider problems, installing equipment e.g. scanners and replacing hardware where necessary.

Software

Instigating the switch to Outlook for email by all councillors as opposed to other email packages. This has been critical in ensuring consistency with contacting and diary management between SDC officers and councillors.

Updating virus software

Establishment of 'Disaster boxes' – backups of all software discs and backups of data

Technical Skills

Building up confidence and technical skill levels with councillors to enable them to trouble-shoot and problem solve their own user problems e.g. jammed printers.

Approximately 10% of visits made relate to technical support issues.

Training

One to one visits

One to one visits training councillors according to their level of need in use of email, internet, basic use of Adobe and Word. 10 councillors have declined the offer of one to one training sessions, and 23 councillors have had regular weekly appointments, with 22 having occasional visits.

Classroom based training

Over 50 x 1 hour training sessions covering 16 modular areas (including: Word, Introduction to Outlook, Using Outlook Calendar, Using Outlook Contacts, Making the Most of the Web) have been developed and run for members and staff together. 24 councillors attended out of the 222 total attendees.

The above activities have resulted in: building up councillors' skills-base in outlook (email, calendar and contacts) resulting in improvements in communications, productivity and time management.

Of those councillors who have taken up the one to one training offered, the IT Support Officer feels that 75% of those he has seen have reached a competency level that is considered suitable for their work as councillors whilst 25% require further IT training to reach a suitable competency level. As 10 councillors have declined the training a judgement cannot be taken on their level of competency.

5.2 Work plan for remaining months until September

Please note the IT Support Trainer is 10 months into a 51 week fixed term contract. Tasks planned for the remaining two months include:

- Meet training needs of councillors bringing all up to required competency level.
- Assess skills and training needs of all councillors via an assessment sheet.
- Repeat delivery of the modular training sessions, and open up to staff and councillors.
- Further one to one training and technical support to cover the areas described above.

5.3 The IT Support role was a fixed term contract for 51 weeks, however, arising from the Scrutiny Review, options are set out below as to how this role could be extended:

Option 1: Extend current contract of employment by up to 12 months from September 2006

Implications:

This option would mean that councillors would still be able to utilise the current level of technical support and training as and when required. A benefit is that the IT Support Trainer can assist with staff training in the same way that has happened so far by undertaking joint sessions that are open to staff and councillors. The drawback is that there may be extra capacity that is not used. Support for the new intake of councillors next year would be readily in place.

Recent changes to legislation give fixed term contract employees almost as many rights as permanent employees e.g. redundancy and redeployment provisions. An extension of the current contract of employment of the IT Support Officer may give rise to an unfair dismissal claim on expiry and if it results in the IT Support Officer being employed for 2 years or more will give rise to a redundancy payment on expiry.

Annual cost £22,754 including on-costs, commencing September 2006

No budget currently available for this option. It would be necessary to take a supplementary estimate of approximately £13,000 for 2006/07 (half year) and a bid in the portfolio planning and budget setting process for the period from April 2007 beyond.

Option 2: Contract ceases with existing post-holder in September and an incumbent sought for an 8 month appointment in May 2007

Implications:

This option would mean that the current level of technical support, including out of hours support, would cease and would be replaced with the ICT support team supporting councillor's technical queries by scheduling requests into their current work loads. Training needs could be met via external courses as outlined in option 2. The new Councillor intake in May will have full support, assuming the position can be filled at that time.

Non renewal of the current contract of employment of the IT Support Officer will count as a dismissal. No rights to ordinary unfair dismissal or redundancy arise.

Salary for 8 month period £15,169 including on-costs commencing May 2007

This option would not come into place until May 2007 therefore a non-recurring bid could be included in the portfolio planning and budget setting process for 2006/08 of approximately £20,000 to include overheads.

Option 3: 'Call-off' contractual arrangement for I.T. support and training is established to commence post September 2006

Implications:

This option would mean that councillors would still be able to access a level of technical support and one to one training. The Councillor IT Trainer could still be utilised for staff training, if required. This more flexible arrangement would mean that demand is met during busy times e.g. May 2007, whilst money would not be wasted during quiet times.

Other options for training support could be pursued in tandem with this arrangement, such as promoting external IT courses available in Salisbury, available on a daily delegate rate. Given the restricted availability of training rooms from September 2006 with the closure of the Bourne Hill offices, outsourcing the delivery of IT training to an external provider that has its own venue seems a logical step.

Non renewal of the current contract of employment of the IT Support Officer will count as a dismissal. No rights to ordinary unfair dismissal or redundancy arise.

Estimated annual cost based on average 3 hours a week's support to councillors - @ approx £20 per hour = £3,120, commencing September 2006. Could be funded from existing ICT budget.

Any additional training (external) required for councillors could be sourced externally, estimated 20 delegate days @£150 per day = £3,000. Could be funded from the Councillor Training budget.

Nb. It is recommended that should members prefer this option, a contract be put in place for the maximum period of one year with a review to be taken at the end of this period. Please note that under EU regulations a call off contract cannot be for more than three years.

Option 4: 'Call-off' contractual arrangement for I.T. support and training is established to commence May 2007.

Implications:

This option would mean that, until May 2007, the current level of technical support, including out of hours support, would cease and would be replaced with the ICT support team supporting councillor's technical queries by scheduling requests into their current work loads. Training needs could be met via external courses as outlined in option 2. The new Councillor intake in May will then have a level of IT support and one to one training, as required.

Non renewal of the current contract of employment of the IT Support Officer will count as a dismissal. No rights to ordinary unfair dismissal or redundancy arise.

Estimated annual cost based on average 3 hours a week support to councillors - @ approx £20 per hour = £3,120, commencing May 2007. Could be funded from existing ICT budget.

Any additional training (external) required for councillors could be sourced externally, estimated 20 delegate days @£150 per day = £3,000. Could be funded from the Councillor Training budget.

NB. It is recommended that should members prefer this option, a contract be put in place for a maximum period of six months, with a review be taken at the end of this period. Please note that under EU regulations a call off contract cannot be for more than three years.

Note:

All options contain an element of risk that the existing post-holder may not wish to continue in the role. In this eventuality for options 1 and 2 a new post-holder could be sought. The same applies for options 3 and 4.

Recommended Option:

Option 4 contains maximum flexibility and cost efficiency, and is therefore recommended for Cabinet's approval.

6.0 Recommendations:

It is recommended that Cabinet approve:

- (1) The production of new training materials utilising the £25,000 2006/07 members' training budget along with a supplementary estimate of £10,000 in order to allow for full production of training materials in preparation for the new intake in 2007, along with a request that the members' training budget be subject to an annual review and a proposed annual reduction of £5,000 for the following two years in order to meet the initial £10,000 investment.
- (2) The formation of a cross party training steering group, with the role of overseeing training and development for members at the council and for Group Leaders to make nominations for membership of this group, with a view that these members will also represent the council **on a county-wide steering group.**
- (3) The establishment of a 'call-off' contractual arrangement for IT support and training to commence May 2007 for a maximum period of six months with a review to be taken at the end of this period.

7.0 Implications:

- **Financial** See implications built into the report
- **Legal** See implications built into the report
- **Human Rights** Article 6 [right to a fair trial] is not engaged
- **Personnel** See implications built into the report
- **Community Safety** None
- **Environmental** None

- **ICT** See implications built into the report
- **Council's Core Values** Providing excellent service
Communicating with the public
- **Wards affected** All



SALISBURY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Draft Councillors' Training & Development Programme

The training programme consists of five elements:

- **Pre-induction module:** aimed at candidates.
- **Survival Induction Module:** for new members.
- **Members Induction/ Development Programme:** for all members, but with a particular focus on new members.
- **Leadership:** Aimed at cabinet members, chairs, vice chairs and those aspiring to such positions
- **Continuing Development:** Additional training opportunities on specific themes.

1

PRE INDUCTION ARRANGEMENTS

The pre-induction process is based around the council's successful job advertisement recruitment campaign.

Pre Induction Pack

Those responding to the advertisement or those selected by the local political parties receive a comprehensive information pack containing:

- Candidates guide (electoral arrangements)
- Council fact file - budget summary, structure, functions, etc.
- Vision, Core Values & priorities
- The national scene, awards & accolades
- A guide to partnerships
- IDeA local authority benchmark data
- Maps & stats
- Councillor allowances and resources
- Members Induction and Training Programme

Pre - induction event

The information pack is augmented by an introductory 'taster session,' where candidates can meet other members and senior officers, the format of the evening is based around the following:

- SDC its culture and direction of travel - Chief Executive
- The electoral process - Phil Bellas
- The members' perspective - Leader
- Scrutiny - councillor presentation
- Area Committee - councillor presentation
- Meet the members (informal chat with a cross section of members)

2

SURVIVAL INDUCTION PROGRAMME

Following the election, successful candidates are provided with an intensive six-week induction aimed to get them '*up and running*' in their new role. These sessions are generally discussion based in a group environment with plenty of scope for Q&As. They are well supported with written materials, multi-media presentations, practical exercises and some sessions are delivered by professional facilitators/trainers. The core of this programme includes:

- The Councillors' Reception - a social 'get-to-know-you' evening, signing the declaration of acceptance of office, official and press photos, issue of security passes and other necessary administrative matters.
- Meet the team - a chance to meet the management team and service managers.
- Seminar - Surviving the early months with introduction to the training and development programme.
- District tour - bus tour of council facilities and services.
- Planning and Area Committee crash-course - includes determining real planning applications.
- Introducing Scrutiny - all new backbenchers.
- One to one training and development needs assessment.
- Home visit to install IT equipment with introductory session.
- Charing Skills - selected members
- Leadership and the Role of the cabinet member - cabinet members

3

MEMBERS' INDUCTION/ DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

To be effective in any job you need to know what is required of you and you must also have the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve it. The *members' development programme* is built around an assessment of each individual members' training and development needs, which is then addressed through a flexible modular programme. The core programme is supported by a range of high quality training materials that build into a comprehensive reference manual. In addition, a range of optional courses and additional information is provided within each module for those with particular interests.

The programme acknowledges the time constraints faced by most members and is arranged as a series of bite-sized training courses - most of which can be undertaken in the comfort of the members' own home. The programme can be completed within 6-8 months, based on an average of 3-4 hours study per month - although the pace of progress is determined by the member's individual requirements.

Module 1: *The effective councillor*

Following the euphoria of election night, you will soon be faced with the day-to-day challenges of life as a ward councillor. This module will give members the skills and knowledge they need to become an effective ward councillor. It covers: how local government works, working with and getting things done for constituents, standards of conduct and how to survive the committee system.



An introduction to local government ▫ Legislative framework ▫ Structures ▫ Functions ▫ Powers ▫ Financial framework ▫



Working in the Ward: ▫ Managing your case load ▫ Getting things done for your constituents ▫ Serving on outside bodies ▫ The members' support service ▫



Standards & Conduct ▫ The National Code of Conduct ▫ Interests ▫ Gifts and hospitality ▫ Slander & Defamation ▫ The Ombudsman ▫



Meetings: ▫ SDC committee structure ▫ Area Committees ▫ Law and conduct ▫ Access to information ▫ Exempt business ▫

Module 2: *Community leadership*

As a councillor you are a vital democratic link between public services and the people who depend upon them. This module will equip you with the skills you need as a community leader. It covers: how to engage all sections of the community, deal with difficult people and stay in touch with local issues in your community.



Consultation & community engagement: ▫ Consultation techniques ▫ Community and parish planning ▫ Partnership working ▫



Equalities & diversity: ▫ Disability discrimination ▫ Diversity awareness ▫ Race Relations Act ▫



Working in Partnership: ▫ Parish and Town Councils ▫ Local partnerships ▫ Working with the voluntary Sector ▫



Mediation & negotiation: ▫ Resolving conflict ▫ Dealing with difficult people ▫ Assertiveness ▫

Module 3: *Inside the council*

As a councillor your role includes managing a complex organisation providing over 50 key public services; responsibility for a £100m budget and a workforce of over 700 employees. Your role also involves holding decision makers to account and agreeing strategic priorities and policies for South Wiltshire, both now and in the future. This module provides an introduction to the management of the council, its key services and policies.



Understanding the Budget: □ Introduction to local government finance □ Understanding the accounts □ The Budget process □ Budget consultation □ Financial regulations □ Audit □



The Scrutiny Role: □ Principles of Scrutiny □ The Scrutiny Toolkit □ Serving on a Scrutiny Review Group □ Key skills for Scrutineers □



The Corporate Plan: □ Corporate planning cycle □ Portfolio plans □ Performance management □



On the Frontline: □ Housing □ Environmental Services □ Community Services □ Benefits □

Module 4: *Communication & information*

Communication and Information are essential for councillors - managing the vast amounts of information that will be heading your way, speaking up for local residents, getting to grips with IT and dealing with enquiries from the media and constituents. All are covered in this final module of the programme.



Getting your message across: □ Effective presentations □ Public speaking □
□ Effective Writing □ Facilitation techniques □



Information: □ Data protection □ Freedom of Information □ Data sources □ Research □
□ Manage your mail □ Speed Reading □



Surviving IT: □ Using your kit □ Introduction to MSOutlook and MS Word □ Getting the best from the web □



Dealing with the Media: □ Understanding media thinking □ Preparing a press release □
Interview technique □ Appearing on television □

4

THE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

The Leadership programme is aimed at cabinet members, chairs, vice chairs and those aspiring to such positions. The training is available on a pick and mix basis and is authorised by the Councillors Training & Development Steering Group. Available courses include:

- The IDeA Leadership Academy
- Service specific courses - such as Planning and Licensing
- Charing Skills
- Managing Performance
- Additional modules will be added as appropriate

The Council may wish to explore the possibility of obtaining Leadership coaching/ mentoring from councillors of other local authorities who are already in a Leadership position.

5

CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT

The Members Development Programme aims to provide core competencies for all members. But nothing remains static in local government for very long. New services, duties and powers are conferred regularly, new funding arrangements are introduced and legislation changes all the time. Providing training and briefing materials for members as these changes arise helps to ensure our councillors remain up to date and informed at all times.