

THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 12 OCTOBER 2011

MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT - ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP

This report summarises the work of the Member Training and Development Steering Group and the training and development activity undertaken by Councillors during the financial year 2010/11 together with associated costs.

FOR INFORMATION

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In June 2007 the Member Training and Development Steering Group (MTDSG) was established, chaired by Councillor Christopher Buckmaster, with the brief to produce:

- a policy for Member development
- a strategy for delivering the policy
- a template of expected training and development linked to roles
- a member learning and development plan based on assessment of need against the template
- a budget plan for member development
- a process for reviewing and evaluating the benefit of the investment in member development
- proposals to encourage Members to become better community leaders

1.2 The Steering Group has met regularly since it was established and this is the third report to Council on the work of the group and training and development undertaken by Councillors.

- 1.3 We will be seeking in the coming year to develop better the skills of Members and to encourage and help Members expand their range of skills, especially those who have only been on the Council for relatively short time.

2. THE STEERING GROUP

- 2.1 The Steering Group is made up of four Councillors and three officers. Membership was reviewed following the local elections in 2010 and current members are:

- Councillor Christopher Buckmaster – Chairman
- Councillor Judith Blakeman
- Councillor Barbara Campbell
- Councillor Tony Holt
- Councillor Jonathon Read
- Councillor Tim Jones
- Councillor Rock Feilding-Mellen (ex-officio member)
- Robert Sheppard – Head of Governance Services
- Clair Bantin – Scrutiny Manager
- Mary Ann Lord – Head of Human Resources

- 2.2 The purpose of the Steering Group is to ensure that resources for Member development are used to:

- focus on the strategic priorities of the Council
- help Members better understand the technicalities of the Council e.g. budget setting so they can effectively monitor performance and make constructive recommendations
- provide development opportunities for Councillors to equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to be strong and effective community leaders
- maintain London Member Development Charter standards

3. THE LONDON MEMBER DEVELOPMENT CHARTER

- 3.1 In March 2007 the Cabinet agreed that the Council would make a commitment to the London Member Development Charter (LMDC). This was awarded in September 2008. The LMDC provides a framework to help councils review their approach to member development and ensure that resources are driven by need and priority. It requires all-party commitment and to be Member-led.

- 3.2 The Royal Borough was amongst the first in London to secure Charter status, in Summer 2008. The LMDC scheme anticipates boroughs seeking reaccreditation every three years, so this Council's Charter status is now due for 'renewal'. However the Steering Group has decided **not** to seek Charter re-accreditation at present, though it is keen to continue to maintain Charter standards and improve what we do by way of Member development. This decision reflects greater circumspection about the need to seek external accreditation but, more pragmatically, will avoid unnecessary expenditure of £2k+ and an unnecessary additional work burden for officers at a particularly challenging time for the Authority. Had a paper-based 'light touch' reaccreditation been possible, the Steering Group might well have pursued this. The issue will be kept under review.
- 3.3 The Steering Group will continue to meet and to ensure that the Council addresses the training and development needs of Councillors in a cost effective way.

4. MEMBERS TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

- 4.1 The demands on Councillors are many and varied and Councillors at the Royal Borough know that they are expected to take their training and development seriously in order that they can carry out their role effectively. Training and development needs are identified and met in a number of ways:
- New Councillors benefit from a thorough Induction Programme, including sessions on governance and support available; local government finance and the Council's own financial challenges; ethical standards and the Code of Conduct; and community leadership and partnership working.
 - All Councillors are encouraged to have a one-to-one meeting with one of the officers in order that their training needs can be identified and a personal development plan (PDP) prepared. To supplement this, a Training Needs Survey will now be run periodically.
 - Officers arrange update workshops on topics that require Councillors to be updated on legislative and other changes, e.g. periodic Licensing Committee updates
 - Councillors who take on a new role are invited to attend a meeting with officers to identify other training needs associated with the new role
 - Councillors identify needs and seek approval to attend specific training

- The Leader also makes suggestions where he feels it would be helpful to develop particular skills that Councillors may require for the future

5. TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

- 5.1 Training opportunities and courses are advertised to Councillors through a training Prospectus and on an ad hoc basis as and when new opportunities are identified.
- 5.2 Business Groups identify topics that they feel are relevant and necessary to ensure that Councillors are kept up to date on new topics or issues. The Steering Group also make suggestions.
- 5.3 The Steering Group has recently reviewed one of the more expensive programmes attended by Councillors – the annual Planning Summer School. This is a residential event over 5 days and has received very mixed feedback from previous participants. The Steering Group has agreed that ahead of any places being booked for future events, the Executive Director for Planning and Borough Development will review the programme and advise on its relevance to Kensington and Chelsea Councillors. Furthermore the number of delegates sent each year will normally be restricted to 2 or 3.
- 5.4 In addition, given the increasing pressure on budgets the Chairman of the Steering Group has agreed that any training spend of £500 or more will require the approval of the Chairman.
- 5.5 The range of training undertaken is wide and includes:
- Business Group updates on specific topics
 - External conferences, e.g. 'Westminster Briefings'
 - Internal personal development programmes, e.g. 'Personal Presence and Positive Impact' workshop'
 - One-to-one coaching
 - Mandatory in-house training for new Planning and Licensing Members
 - Briefings, e.g. occasional sessions at the start of Scrutiny meetings
 - Visits (e.g. the 'tour of the Borough' for new Members and the recent visit to the new waste facility at Belvedere, Kent)
 - New Councillor Induction

5.6 During 2010/11 Councillors took part in some 55 different events resulting in 202 learning or training days or part days. A number of internal events were organised including:

- induction sessions for new councillors
- a briefing on safeguarding issues
- a workshop on personal presence and positive impact
- a series of planning workshops/briefings on topics such as planning theory and practice, and on planning law

A visit to the Houses of Parliament was arranged in February and 6 Councillors were joined by five Members from Hammersmith and Fulham. Councillors were given a briefing on Select Committees.

5.7 It is a condition of Councillors attending training or development course or event funded by the Council that they provide feedback on that event so that others can learn from their experience. Feedback also enables decisions to be made about whether to invest in that event in the future. Over the last year the Steering Group has placed greater emphasis on the need for such feedback, and Members are now becoming used to writing a brief item on their experiences for the periodic Member Training and Development Newsletter.

5.8 The Council will continue to look to run joint training events with neighbouring councils. In house training specifically focused on the needs of Inner London Boroughs might be more beneficial than general training courses open to a wide range of participants.

6. TRAINING BUDGET

6.1 The budget for Member Training and Development for 2010/11 was £31,730. This covers internal and external events and conferences as well as travel and other expenses associated with attending. A total of £21,194 was spent during the year leaving an under spend of £10,536 representing 33 per cent of the budget.

6.2 Even in these straightened times to spend only 60% of the training budget is disappointing. However it does suggest, in a Borough Election year with a new cohort of Members, that the internally provided New Member Induction Programme, including intra-party mentoring and Scrutiny Committee briefings, all at no cost, meets most new Councillors immediate needs. There is little doubt too that many Members are cautious about attending external events unless they have a reasonable expectation of a return (in terms of learning) on their time commitment and the Council's investment.

7. THE NEWSLETTER

7.1 The Steering Group commissions a twice-yearly Newsletter for Councillors. In addition to updating Councillors on various issues, the Newsletter has become an important way of sharing feedback from training events.

8. THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

8.1 Looking forward, the key challenges for 2011/12 could be:

- to provide better and more effective training and to support Councillors in the move to tri-borough working
- helping Members to learn from experience and best practice here and elsewhere to make the Council's new Ward working arrangements a success.
- planning a new 'Be a Councillor' campaign for 2012-14 with a view to encouraging a diverse and talented range of people to consider putting themselves forward for election in May 2014.

FOR INFORMATION

Councillor Christopher Buckmaster
Chairman, Member Training and Development Steering Group

Background papers used in the preparation of this report: Steering Group agenda papers and minutes and training records

Officer contact: Mary-Ann Lord, Head of Human Resources, on 020 7361 2347 and at Mary-Ann.Lord@rbkc.gov.uk