

By: David Tonks, Head of Audit and Risk
To: Governance and Audit Committee – 30 November 2010
Subject: MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: To provide an update on the introduction of a training programme for members of the committee.

FOR DECISION

Introduction

1. In April 2010 members of the Committee were asked to agree the need for a member development programme linked to the content of the forward work programme and Committee Terms of Reference. The outcome at the April meeting was that a group of Members should be established by the Head of Audit and Risk to look in more detail at training issues, and to report back to a future meeting of the Committee. The overall need for Member training linked to the content of the forward work programme was agreed.

Background

2. The April report set out the guidance relating to the functions of audit committees and in particular the need for training in the following areas:
 - Financial reporting and understanding financial statements
 - Governance
 - The regulatory framework
 - The role of internal and external audit
 - Risk Management
3. The group of members and officers have met and accepted that these themes for training are correct, but also identified that additional training is required in relation to the role of the committee. There was some debate as to whether there should be a formal training needs assessment for the committee members, but it was considered that this would not be a productive process.
4. The remaining discussion points related to the most effective method of delivery and the timing of the training.

Method of delivery

5. The main point of discussion was that training to date has been delivered via officers, and that while these officers are extremely competent in their respective specialist areas, they are not always specialist trainers. It was the consensus view of the group that training should be delivered by specialist trainers, supported by officers to provide the Kent context to the theory.

6. The delivery of development programmes by professional trainers does have obvious benefits, both in terms of the effectiveness of the overall product and in freeing up officer time for core work. However, the overall budget for member development for the current year has been spent or otherwise allocated, and next year is only likely to be in the region of £40k. It is estimated that providing training for the committee with professional trainers would cost at least £5k, which would be disproportionate compared to the overall budget for member training. In the current financial climate increasing the budget would not be possible.
7. It is proposed to consider use of the central budget for some aspects of training, while opportunities to source professionally delivered training at zero or minimal cost will continue to be investigated. However, continuing to rely on officer led training will need to be the default position.

Timing

8. It was agreed by the group that the best time for formal training would be immediately prior to the start of the formal meeting, and that these sessions could be open to all members. The training could also be recorded and added to any induction material given to new committee members, or used as a refresher if required by existing members.

Conclusion

9. Member training is important to ensure that the Governance and Audit Committee remains effective and delivers against its terms of reference. Although the preferred method for delivery of the programme is using external professional trainers, this may not be possible, but a formal training programme should be started from March 2011, based around the work programme of the Committee.
10. In addition, Corporate Finance has successfully delivered a learning and development programme on financial management for Members and senior officers that covered many of the themes identified in paragraph 2. This programme is likely to be repeated in 2011/12 and can be used to supplement the training provided to the Committee.

Recommendations

11. Members are asked to give their support to the commencement of a training programme from March 2011.

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