

By: Mr A J King, Deputy Leader  
To: Selection and Member Services Committee – 8 October 2008  
Subject: Member Development Charter and Member Development

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Summary: To note the ongoing work of the IMG: Member Development on the Member Development Charter and Member Induction and Development Programmes.

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## **Introduction**

1. (1) The Committee will recall that the three Leaders of the Political Groups on the County Council signed a commitment in September 2007 to achieve accreditation for the South East Employers Member Development Charter by April 2009.

(2) At its meeting on 10 October 2007 this Committee established an Informal Member Group on Member Development (IMG) to act as a Steering Group and as Member Champions to oversee the work being undertaken by Officers in the Democratic Services and Local Leadership Unit and the Personnel and Development Division to assemble the evidence to support the Kent County Council's application for Member Development Charter.

(3) Time is of the essence to assemble this evidence and to have this evidence externally evaluated by a Peer Group appointed by the South Eastern Employer's Organisation with a view to the Member Development Charter being awarded by April 2009. Arrangements are being made for this external assessment team to review the County Council's evidence for the Charter on a date to be confirmed in February 2009.

## **Member Development Policy**

2. The County Council will be asked to approve the Member Development Policy at its meeting on 16 October 2008.

## **Member Development and Training**

3. (1) The IMG met on Thursday 11 September 2008 and has commissioned officers to prepare an exciting, innovative, and creative interactive induction programme following the County Council Elections with an ongoing programme of Member Development based on the training development and needs identified by the survey conducted by the three political groups in the summer of 2007.

## *General*

(2) This programme will provide the opportunity for elected Members to acquire the new skills to meet the emerging legislative framework in terms of empowerment in working more closely in the community and in partnership with other bodies.

## *Induction*

(3) The IMG recognises that there is an excellent opportunity to work with the local authority family in discreet bespoke training packages to meet Members needs.

(4) The IMG recognised that all too often in the past, new Members of the Council have been left alone on election to the County Council which they described as daunting and intimidating.

(5) The IMG has commissioned a range of support which will guide Members through the early stages following the re-election. This ranges from an early survival guide to help Members through the initial six weeks and beyond that a mix of learning and E Learning Courses 'webinar' (where a Trainer has to sit in front of a web-cam at a specified time and conducts an interactive session with those logged on to the web-class event).

## *Buddy System*

(6) The IMG are unanimous that almost without exception that experience on being elected to the County Council was daunting. Members felt that they were left alone, they found the County Council intimidating and that there was much more which could have been provided to support them in the early stages following their election.

(7) At previous County Council elections Managers from the Democratic Services and Local Leadership Unit have been allocated a number of newly elected Members to act as a first point of contact for information which Members require. However, it is fair to say that experience has shown the use of these Managers as a resource was not as good as it was anticipated.

(8) Many authorities have established 'Buddy Schemes' of elected Members. The IMG recommend this as a way forward together with an Officer Buddy Scheme to provide the support that a newly elected Member or any Member might welcome.

(9) The Committee may wish to note that many local authorities have taken the step further by persuading some of their former Members who did not seek re-election to act as a Buddy/Mentor to some of the new Members, and this has proved to be invaluable.

## **Early Documentation for Newly Elected Members of the County Council**

4. (1) The IMG feel it is appropriate that on election to the County Council, in addition to the statutory information that a newly elected Member requires (the

Members handbook which covers detailed information around all aspects of elected Members relationship with the County Council including Members allowances, Code of Conduct, Member and Officer Relations, the County Council's Constitution and a Diary which will include the training dates throughout the forthcoming year). Members need additional quick-to-digest information which will help them through the initial few weeks.

### *Fact sheets*

(2) The IMG has asked that a fact sheet is prepared for each electoral division to include contact details of Area Educational Officers, Divisional Social Services offices, where to report a highway pot hole or a street light which is out and much more.

### **Member Development and Training**

5. The IMG considered proposals for a Member Development and Training Programme based on the survey conducted by the three Political Groups in the summer of 2007. The IMG has asked that three events should be organised for the first few days following the election:

- (a) procedural rules for a County Council and a Committee meeting;
- (b) the Member Code of Conduct and Ethics, including the role of the Standards Committee; and
- (c) the role of Overview and Scrutiny and its relationship to the Executive (Cabinet).

### **Recommendations.**

6. The Committee is asked to endorse the actions of the IMG: Member Development for:-

- (a) achievement of the South East Employers Member development Charter by April 2009;
- (b) the proposed programme of induction and support of Members following the County Council elections; and
- (c) the proposed programme of Member Development and Training.

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