

By: Head of Democratic Services & Local Leadership
Director of Personnel and Development

To: Standards Committee – 25 November 2008

Subject: Member Development

Introduction

1. (1) The County Council has commissioned a number of workstreams around the elected Member role and Member development to embrace the emerging legislative framework.

Member Development Charter

(2) In September 2007 the three leaders of the County Council signed an agreement to seek and achieve accreditation for the South East Employers Member Development Charter by April 2009.

(3) The Selection and Member Services Committee established an Informal Member Group (IMG) on Member Development to act as a steering group for the work undertaken by officers in assembling the evidence to support the application for the Member Development Charter but also importantly to act as a group of Member champions within their political groups.

(4) The aim is to have the evidence assembled for a peer group to evaluate whether the evidence meets the criteria of the South East Employers organisation and the County Council is therefore ready to apply for accreditation.

(5) Arrangements are being made for this peer group to undertake this assessment on 5 February 2009.

Member Development Policy

(6) The County Council will be asked to approve the Member Development Policy at its meeting on 11 December 2008.

Induction and Member Development

(7) The IMG Member Development at a meeting on 11 September 2008 commissioned officers to prepare for the approval of the Selection and Member Services Committee an exciting, innovative, creative and interactive induction programme following the County Council elections in June 2009 recognising that this needs to be an ongoing programme based on the training and development needs identified by the survey conducted by the three political groups in the summer of 2007.

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

(9) The IMG Member Development recognises that there is an excellent opportunity to work with the family of local authorities (Borough and District Councils) in providing bespoke training packages to meet Members needs. Members have expressed concern that all too often on election to the County Council they felt unprepared and lacked sufficient guidance to perform the various roles which were expected of them immediately upon election. As a consequence, in preparation for the elections in 2009, the IMG has commissioned a range of support interventions and activities which will guide Members through the early stages following the election. This ranges from an "Early Survival Guide" to help Members through the initial six weeks and beyond as well as a mix of learning and e-learning courses and a library of resource materials.

(10) The IMG Member Development is also recommending that a "buddy system" be created. This should include not only managers from the Democratic Services and Local Leadership Unit, who have always been allocated a number of newly elected Members to act as a first point of contact, but also elected Members who can mentor new Members.

Early documentation for the newly elected Members of the County Council

(11) The IMG feel it is appropriate that on election to the County Council, in addition to the statutory information a newly elected Member requires, Members need quick and easy to digest information which will help them through the initial few weeks.

Fact sheets

(12) The IMG has asked that a fact sheet is prepared for each elected Member's electoral division to include contact details of the Area Education officers, divisional Social Services offices, where to report a pot-hole or streetlight which is out and much, much more.

Member Development and Training

(13) 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. However, the IMG has also asked that three events should be organised for within days of the election. These are:-

- (a) Procedural rules for a County Council and Committee meeting;
- (b) The role of Overview and Scrutiny and its relationship to the Executive/Cabinet; and,

- (c) most importantly for this Committee, The Member Code of Conduct and Ethics including the role of the Standards Committee.

(14) As mentioned above the County Council is working with colleagues from across the other Kent local authorities to develop and share training programmes as many elected Members needs are common to all local authorities. Pooling Member Development and Training needs and delivery of a shared programme will be an effective use of resources.

(15) Members will remember that the Chairman, Mr Daley and Mr London attended a course arranged for all local authorities in Kent on mediation/conciliation on 7 July 2008.

Recommendation

2. The Committee are asked to note the report.

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Background Information: *Include ALL background information taken into account in preparing the report. (This does not include previous Committee Reports)*