



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Date:	Friday, 21st May, 2010
Subject:	Member Development Framework Update
Reporting Officer:	Mr. Liam Steele, Head of Committee and Members' Services (extension 6325)
Contact Officer:	Mrs. Julie Lilley, Members' Liaison Officer (extension 6321)

Purpose of Report

To advise the Committee of progress made with regard to the Member Development Framework and, in particular, the induction programme for new Members.

Background

Members may recall that in May, 2007 a Member Development Working Group was established made up of officers from Committee and Members' Services, the Core Improvement Team and the Human Resources Section, together with a representative from each of the Party Groups. The Working Group, over a period of time, and taking account of the development needs of Members and best practice, designed a Member Development Framework, an integral element of which was an induction programme for new Members. In addition, a process was put in place whereby all Members were given the opportunity to have a Personal Development Plan drawn up which in turn allowed them to access an individual budget for training and developmental activity.

Current Position

Work has progressed significantly on all elements of the Member Development Framework. Specific detail is set out below:

Personal Development Plans for Members

To date twenty eight Members have taken the opportunity to participate in individual personal development planning (PDP) meetings with an external facilitator from the

IDeA and have individual personalised development plans (PDPs) drawn up. Of these Members, sixteen accessed their personal development budgets during 2009/2010 in order to participate in development activities. During that period in excess of twenty five separate development opportunities were offered to Members. The type of development activities undertaken by Members is varied and ranges from accredited training courses to attendance at conferences with themes in which Members have expressed a particular interest. The Members' Liaison Officer, on an ongoing basis, sources details of training and development activities which may be of interest to individual Members with PDPs.

A Party Group breakdown of Members with PDPs is set out below:

SF	8 Members
DUP	7 Members
UUP	2 Members
SDLP	8 Members
ALL	2 Members
PUP	1 Member

Members' development activities

A programme of Members' development activities made up of eighteen separate modules was delivered between October 2008 and September 2009. The modules were facilitated by a number of expert training providers and addressed generic development needs identified from Members' PDPs e.g. media skills, IT skills, chairing meetings, communication skills etc.

An evaluation exercise of the activities has been undertaken. It is intended that the 2010/2011 programme of activities will build on those areas of training which Members indicated that they would like to explore further.

The roles and skills required by elected members are complex, challenging and constantly evolving. Addressing the capacity building needs of members is therefore vital to ensure the effective delivery of the corporate plan and effective and efficient transition of the council as part of future local government reform. In terms of leadership capacity we need to continue providing development in the areas such as media, IT etc and those identified as part of the political skills framework i.e. community leadership; partnership working; communication skills; political understanding and questioning and challenge.

In addition the role of the Elected Member is becoming even more challenging with the current economic climate, the drive to deliver further efficiencies and at the same time meet the increasing demand for council services and address thematic issues across the city. It is therefore important Members and Officers are provided with the necessary knowledge and skills through council specific training in relation to the key council priorities of strategic planning; financial management, performance management and organisational development. There is also an opportunity to develop and deliver joint member officer development activities, where appropriate. This can assist in building member-officer relationships, maximising learning and assist in achieving economies of scale and value for money.

A structured capacity building programme is required to provide Members with the required knowledge and skills to fulfil their role effectively. A number of methods for delivering the development activities will be considered in the delivery of the programme i.e. awareness sessions; development programmes; sharing of best practice through peer networks; coaching and mentoring.

Induction Training for Members

Induction training for new Members is recognised as being crucially important in terms of ensuring that Members can quickly assimilate into the life of the Council as a public body while at the same time helping them to deliver for their constituents. An effective induction programme is not only useful for new Members but for the Council as a whole since properly advised and well informed Members are better able to take decisions which will benefit all of the ratepayers of the City.

Appendix A sets out the general content and framework for Members' induction and includes timeframes for the delivery of the Corporate elements of the programme. Included are sessions covering procedural matters and a number of key Corporate issues, as well as specific Committee awareness sessions.

Another important element of the framework is the development of a comprehensive Induction Pack including Service-specific information which will provide Councillors with an easily accessible and valuable resource to assist them in their roles both within the Council and as constituency representatives.

During the current Council term those Members who have been co-opted or nominated have been offered induction training consisting of the corporate modules set out in the induction programme, as well as media training and the opportunity to have PDPs drawn up. All of the Members who have been co-opted or appointed in this Council term have availed of this opportunity. Most new Members have additionally had the benefit of one-to-one induction briefing sessions with senior officers.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note:

- the progress made to date with regard to the implementation of the Member Development Framework
- the proposed content of future Member development activities
- the proposed induction training plan for new Members –following the Local Government Elections in May, 2011, as outlined in Appendix A.

Decision Tracking

Member Development activities will continue to be provided and a planned induction programme will be implemented following the 2011 Local Government Elections and during the ensuing Council term.

Key to Abbreviations

N/A

Documents Attached

Appendix A