

## **Member Development Steering Group**

**Wednesday, 29th August, 2012**

### **MEETING OF MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP**

Members present: Councillor Hendron (Chairman);  
Alderman Rodgers; and  
Councillors Convery and McCabe.

In attendance: Mr. S. McCrory, Democratic Services Manager;  
Mrs. K. Russell, Human Resources and  
Organisational Development Manager;  
Mr. G. Quinn, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and  
Mrs. J. Lilley, Democratic Services Officer.

#### **Apology**

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Hussey and Kyle.

#### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 29th February were taken as read and signed as correct.

#### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were reported.

#### **Members' Personal Development Planning Process**

The Democratic Services Manager reminded the Steering Group that, at its meeting on 29th February, it had agreed, in order to take account of best practice approaches to personal development planning in other local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales, to adopt a revised Members' PDP process in line with the Council's approach to the Member Development Charter.

He advised the Members that, to date, 37 Members had completed a self assessment of their skills and had participated in a structured PDP interview with the external facilitator commissioned to deliver the revised PDP process.

The Democratic Services Manager explained that, in addition to the identification of individual development needs, the PDP process had also served to highlight a range of generic needs which would be incorporated into a Member Training and Development Programme.

He then detailed some of the topics which had been identified through the PDP process, including:-

- RPA
- Planning – understanding the new framework
- Striking the rate
- Understanding the structures of government in Northern Ireland
- The Council – making it relevant to citizens
- Understanding Council finances
- The economy and funding streams
- Community engagement and communication
- Social housing strategies
- Use of social media

The Democratic Services Manager advised the Members that a range of approaches to learning and development would be adopted to accommodate preferred learning styles and to ensure that developmental activities were fit for purpose and maximised the benefits to be gained by Members. The proposed activities included:-

- Network discussions
- Best Practice Visits and Conferences
- Informal events with key stakeholders
- Coaching, mentoring and one to one sessions

The Senior Democratic Services Officer explained to the Group that, in addition to these activities, it was proposed to deliver a bespoke programme to be known as the 'Belfast Members' Academy' which has been specifically designed to build the capacity of the city's current and future leaders. While the initial focus of the programme would concentrate on the capacity of newer Members, it was explained that any Member who so wished would be able to participate on the programme which would be revised to take account of Members views and feedback as it was rolled out. He reiterated the importance of ensuring that Member development was viewed as an integral part of organisational development and, as such, was designed to complement officer development programmes.

After discussion, the Steering Group agreed that those areas identified through the revised PDP process, including the roll out of the Belfast Members Academy, would

be incorporated into an overall Members' Training and Development Programme which would be delivered in advance of the next PDP process commencing during Spring 2013.

### **Member Development Evaluation Framework**

The Organisational Development Manager advised the Steering Group that, following the Council being awarded the Northern Ireland Charter for Elected Member Development, the South East Employers Organisation (SEE) had made a series of recommendations in relation to those areas which the Council would need to focus and improve upon in order to gain 'Charter Plus' status, which was the next level in the Charter accreditation scheme.

She explained that the Council's evaluation mechanisms for Member development had been one area which had been identified for improvement and that SEE had recommended that, in order to improve organisational performance and make an impact at community level, Member development activity should be subject to a robust evaluation process.

The Organisational Development Manager advised Members that Democratic Services and Corporate Human Resources were continuing to develop such an evaluation framework which would be based on the Kirkpatrick model, which was being utilised across the local government sector.

After discussion, the Steering Group agreed that work should continue on the development of an appropriate and robust evaluation framework for Member development and that it be submitted for the Steering Group's consideration prior to implementation.

### **Advanced Diploma in Civic Leadership and Community Planning**

The Democratic Services Officer advised the Steering Group that, currently, two Members of the Council, along with a number of Elected Members from other Councils, were undertaking the Advanced Diploma in Civic Leadership and Community Planning at the University of Ulster, Jordanstown. She reminded Members that the Steering Group had agreed, prior to the diploma being offered to Members for enrolment during October, 2013, that it should be evaluated to ascertain its overall benefits and value for money.

She pointed out that those Members participating in the current programme had provided their views on a number of aspects including content, relevance and the benefits to be derived to the individual and to the Council.

She reported that the general outcome of the evaluation had been very positive and that the diploma had been endorsed by the Members who had attended.

In response to a query from a Member, the Senior Democratic Services Officer advised the Steering Group that a policy was being developed currently which would set out a series of guidelines and the assistance which would be available for Members wishing to undertake accredited study.

Following discussion, the Steering Group agreed that the Advanced Diploma in Civic Leadership and Community Planning should be offered to those Members who had included in their PDP a desire to undertake accredited study relevant to community planning and leadership.

Chairman