

Wear Valley District Council

Member Training & Development Strategy

AUGUST 2005

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SUMMARY

This training and development strategy has been devised to outline the Council's objectives for Member Development as part of the Governments Modernisation Agenda. This was highlighted in 'Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Services', which requires Members to improve their capacity and skills in relation to strategic leadership, effective overview and scrutiny, partnership working, performance management and Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

To ensure a more structured approach towards Member development, this strategy outlines the approach that the Council will take towards the development of its elected members.

The benefits to the Council will be for it to take a corporate approach towards training and development to enable it to meet its business objectives and work towards maintaining effective corporate governance and political contribution/leadership.

The benefit to communities and citizens of Wear Valley will be through Members gaining the necessary skills to be effective community leaders. Effective community Leadership involves listening to and involving local communities, building vision and direction, working effectively in partnerships, making things happen on the ground and delivering outcomes for local people, standing up for communities and speaking out for local people on major issues that impact on the community, empowering local communities – creating an environment in which other leadership roles can develop and fostering the development of active citizenship and accountability to communities.

Introduction

The purpose of this training and development strategy is to outline Wear Valley District Council's approach towards the development of its elected Members.

The Council has six key objectives, which Members are committed to. With a strong training and development programme Members will have the necessary skills to help the Council meet them. These key objectives are:

1. POPULATION:

The Council will use its statutory powers, resources and influence to help create a balanced, vibrant and growing population across the whole of Wear Valley District.

2. ENVIRONMENT:

The Council will aim to secure new public and private investment to improve the built and natural environment.

3. ECONOMY:

The Council will enable the development of a continuously improves economic infrastructure and environment in Wear Valley.

4. COMMUNITY SAFETY:

The Council will design its services to increase community safety and prime prevention and work closely with key partners to improve crime reduction.

5. HEALTH:

The Council will use its services to help improve the health and well being of Wear Valley residents and promote healthy lifestyles.

6. LIFELONG LEARNING:

The Council will encourage the development of continuous lifelong learning in Wear Valley.

Statement of Commitment to Member Development

The Council recognises the vital role of Elected Members in local government and we pledge to adopt good practice in Member development by:

- Being fully committed to developing our elected Members in order to achieve the Council's aims and objectives.
- Adopting a Member led strategic approach to Elected Member development.
- Having a Member learning and development plan in place that clearly identifies the difference development activities will make.
- Seeing that learning and development is effective in building capacity.
- Developing Member skills to meet the challenges of modern local government.
- Addressing wider development matters to promote work-life balance and citizenship.

Principles

The Council has formally signed up to a Member Charter and has committed itself to the following principles:

- Provide systems for identifying individual Member needs related to corporate objectives and governance.
- Provision of adequate resources to meet the objectives of training and development from both internal and external sources
- The establishment of individual learning plans for members providing a minimum of five days development each year.
- The provision of an annual Member Development Programme that assists them to fulfill their duties and responsibilities.
- Effective communication of training and development opportunities to Members.
- Develop an induction programme for all new Members provided within a month of appointment.
- Ensure equality of treatment and be aware of individual needs and circumstance where possible offering appropriate support.
- The introduction of a mentoring programme for new Members, to provide them with support and development opportunities from experienced elected Members.
- Assist in the building of effective partnerships with internal and external stakeholders and partners.
- Develop procedures for scrutiny of provision.

1.0 Roles & Responsibilities

1.1 Member Development Working Group

To assist in achieving these aims and to further Member development generally, a Member Development Working Group has been established. To ensure that there is a balance of views and is reflective of the political make up of the Council the Group consists of :-

4 Labour Members
1 Liberal Democrat Member
1 Independent Member

The role of this Group is to assist in the identification and evaluation of Member training and development by the Council with its specific terms of reference being identified as follows:

- To assist in the production of an annual training programme for Members
- Consider specific areas of Member development identified by the Council
- Assist in the promotion and development of member training within the Council
- To be a point of contact for those Members who require/request individual training needs

1.2 Individual Members

All Members will be responsible for:

- Improving their own performance
- Helping others to improve their performance
- Participate fully in the preparation and maintenance of individual development plans.
- Attend a minimum of five internal training modules per financial year.
- Apply what they have learnt to their work on behalf of the Council
- Communicate their development needs via the Member Development Group to the Head of Committee and Democratic Services.

1.3 Directors

Directors will be responsible for:

- Identifying key strategic activities that require training for Members
- Providing briefings and training to Members on key areas of service delivery or development and on the Governments modernising agenda for local government
- Ensuring that Members understand the activities undertaken within their Department
- Supporting Member development activities and positively contribute to the annual Member Development Programme

1.4 Human Resources

The Director of Central Resources, through the Head of Committee and Democratic Services will be responsible for:

- Identifying training and development needs and developing strategies and plans to meet them.
- Developing policies and procedures, which promote effective and relevant vocational education, training and development.
- Developing and promoting member training and development initiatives
- Ensuring that a suitable infrastructure is in place to support training and development
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the Council's investment in training and development.

2.0 STRUCTURE

In order to support this strategy, specific provisions will be developed to include:

- Induction Programme
- Personal Development Planning
- Skills Development
- Raising awareness
- Community Leadership
- Information and Communication – E-Government
- Corporate initiatives and policies

Actual provision will depend upon the role and experience of individual members and will be provided upon the basis of development questionnaires and personal development plans.

3.0 EQUALITY

Access to training and development activities should be equitable, based upon individual and Council needs. In accordance with the Council's equality scheme and policy, the Council will seek to ensure that Members are not discriminated against on the grounds of sex, race, ethnicity, disability or sexual orientation.

As part of the review process, analysis of the training provision will be made in relation to diversity issues within the Council and the make up of its elected Members

4.0 SELECTION FOR COURSES

To ensure effective use of resources and in accordance with systems used for employee attendance at any personal development activity, including seminars and courses, attendance would have to be authorised by the Director of Central Resources, in consultation with the Leader of the Council or appropriate Chair of Committee.

On completion of any training related activity an evaluation form will be issued to the Member to complete. This will identify their views upon the impact of the training upon themselves and their effective execution of their duties within the Council. This documentation will assist in the process of scrutinizing development activities.

To ensure the effectiveness of this process, the Head of Committee and Democratic Services should be informed of any training activities to ensure that individual training records and documentation is kept up-to-date

5.0 METHOD OF DELIVERY

The Council will consider a variety of training methods to train and develop its Members. Some or all of the following may apply:

- Coaching/mentoring (on-the-job), which should be planned and appropriate time put aside to maximise its effectiveness.
- In-house training courses
- CD ROM/on-line computer based learning packages
- Planned experiences outside of the Organisation e.g. visits etc
- External courses/conferences
- Distance learning courses
- Library materials
- Reading
- Team or individual briefings

6.0 IMPLEMENTATION

To ensure effective implementation of the strategy, the Head of Committee and Democratic Services will produce a Training and Development program on an annual basis for consideration by the Member Development Working Group.

They will decide on the corporate priorities based upon the need to balanced investment in areas of training against corporate aims and objectives.

7.0 REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years, with a report being prepared for the Member Development Working Group. It will be revised, as appropriate, in accordance with best practice and with any developments regarding Member Development.