

**CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE – 26 SEPTEMBER, 2001**

**TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF ELECTED MEMBERS**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**Purpose**

1. The purpose of this report is to enable the Committee to discuss proposed arrangements for the training and development of elected members.

**Previous Decisions**

2. This matter was considered at a meeting of the former Members Services Working Party in April, 2000. The conclusions of that meeting were:-
  - (a) that the County Council should sign up to the IDEA Charter for Member Training (see Appendix A attached) on the grounds that it was a good target for which to aim;
  - (b) the County Council should develop its own training programme, with most training being undertaken in house, but that training being organised by the Regional LGA should be borne in mind.

**Responsibilities under the Leicestershire County Council Constitution 2001**

3. Under the Council's new Constitution, responsibility for the training and development of members falls to the following bodies:-

The Constitution Committee – which has the function of approving arrangements for providing appropriate support services to meet the needs of elected members and therefore primary responsibility for training and development of members.

The Standards Committee – which has the function of ensuring that all members of the County Council (and co-opted members) have access to training in all aspects of the Code of Conduct for elected members, that this training is actively promoted and that members are aware of the standards expected from local councillors under the Code.

**Background**

4. In the 2000/01 revenue budget a sum of £20,000 was included, with similar amounts in subsequent years, to enable a programme of training for elected members to be developed. At the time the Cabinet identified the particular need to develop the skills of members in relation to conducting the Best Value Review Programme.

Since that time the following events have been held:-

22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2000	Best Value	two ½ day events open to all members
23 <sup>rd</sup> June 2000	Scrutiny	two ½ day events open to all members

(both of the above were undertaken by a Training Consultant from the CIPFA Training Consultancy)

18 <sup>th</sup> June 2001	Introductory Seminar aimed primarily at newly elected members.	
9 <sup>th</sup> July 2001	Seminar for all members on the Leicestershire County Council Constitution 2001	
16 <sup>th</sup> July 2001	Training of members of the Development Control and Regulatory Board on the Planning Code of Conduct using trainers from Oxford Brookes University School of Planning.	

- Specific training is made available generally to members on the use of computers on request. A substantial number of members took up this opportunity two or three years ago but there has been little demand recently. This is expected to change given the influx of new members and continuing development of ICT.

## **Proposals and Issues**

### **Regular Programme of Events**

- It is planned to establish a regular programme of seminar style briefings linked to the cycle of Council meetings. All parties on the Council normally hold Group meetings on the Monday prior to each Council meeting. It is, therefore, convenient to many members for such events to be held during the afternoon on these dates.
- The first such event took place on 9<sup>th</sup> July and involved a presentation on the new Constitution.
- Topics for such events which have been suggested are set out below. Members of the Committee may have other suggestions:-

Effective Scrutiny  
 The New Ethical Framework  
 Race Relations (Amendment) Act  
 Disability Discrimination Act  
 Partnership Working  
 The Council's Financial Setting/Budget Process  
 Overview of Property Assets and Management

### **East Midlands Modern Members' Programme**

9. Under the umbrella of the EMLGA interested authorities are being helped to develop their own training arrangements based on the preparation of "Personal Development Plans for Elected Members". This is based on arrangements which have been operated successfully by Nottinghamshire County Council. Details are set out in Appendix B.
10. The EMLGA provides other courses and also acts more generally as a point of reference for advice on a wide range of training matters. It is able to offer its own staff to deliver some training and where this is not possible it has contacts with a wide range of other institutions and can recommend named individuals who are able to meet particular needs. It is understood that Charnwood Borough Council enlisted the support of EMLGA on training its Members in the Scrutiny process.
11. There has been little opportunity for the County Council to assess the quality of the courses offered by the EMLGA, although some members of the Committee may be in a position to comment.
12. One newly elected member of the Council has already referred to a bulletin on the EMLGA's website as offering "some useful looking courses for members" and has said that he might wish to attend "a couple if not more".

### **Conferences and Courses**

13. The Authority receives a considerable number of invitations to send representatives – both members and officers – to conferences and courses being organised by various institutions such as the LGA, Institute of Local Government Studies, IDEA and a variety of business consultancies and individuals. These typically involve a fee of around £225 per head and often involve travel to London. Members have therefore generally not been encouraged to attend, not least because often the events have been premature in that they have sought to deal with a subject on which the final word from Government on the matter has not been available. Examples of various events which have recently been advertised are being circulated to elected members with this report.
14. It is usual for the County Council's representatives on the Local Government Association to attend conferences and courses targeted at members of the LGA itself or one of its constituent bodies. Since the establishment of the political administration in 1999 this has meant in practice that opportunities to attend have only been open to parties forming the political administration.
15. The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group (Mr. Galton) referred to this issue at a recent meeting of the Scrutiny Reference Group with the Leader of the Council. Mr. Galton is of the view that attendance of members at seminars, conferences and training courses should not be limited to one particular political party. Neither does he believe that attendance at such events should be solely in the gift of the Executive.

16. Mr. Galton has commented that other authorities enable non-executive members, particularly key members from the Scrutiny arm, to attend conferences and training events which would help them carry out their role more effectively and believes that the County Council should do the same. He has therefore put forward the suggestion that a small budget should be set aside for this purpose, to be allocated by the Chief Executive in consultation with Group Leaders.
17. Given that the Standards Committee has responsibility for training elected members on matters of probity it is suggested that that Committee should also be able to commit expenditure from the Members' Training budget. In practice, this would be best operated by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman and Spokesmen of the Standards Committee.

### **Issues for Consideration**

18. The Committee is invited to address the following issues arising from this report:-

Are the proposals for the establishment of a regular programme of events supported? If so, what topics should be covered?

Should the County Council involve itself in the East Midlands Modern Members Programme, develop its own programme or do neither?

Should the County Council prepare and implement personal development plans for its members?

What arrangements should be made for determining member attendance at conferences and courses? In particular, how can it be ensured that members of scrutiny bodies have the opportunity to attend where appropriate?

Is the suggested arrangement relating to access to funds by the Standards Committee (paragraph 17 above) supported?

Should there be a clear requirement upon members and officers attending seminars and courses to prepare briefing papers summarising the details so that information received is properly shared across the County Council?

### **Recommendation**

19. The Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report and indicate what action should be taken on the issues identified in paragraph 18 above.

### **Circulation under Sensitive Issues Procedure.**

None.

**Background Papers**

**None.**

**Officer to Contact**

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