

# WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

## Report by the Chief Executive

### Community Participation Committee : 18 May 2011

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**Subject: Consultation/Engagement Training 2010-11**

#### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The report informs Committee members about the consultation training carried out for employees during 2010-11 and planning for training for 2011-12.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1** Developing effective community engagement and consultation practices is highly important for all public service providers. When it is done well, it leads to better policy development and better and more efficient service delivery. This training equips our employees with the appropriate skills.
- 2.2** The training contributes to delivering the Best Value Improvement Plan (BVIP), Community Engagement.
- 2.3** West Dunbartonshire Council has been working along with the Consultation Institute, (a national body of expertise in consultation practices), to deliver a programme of training for employees leading to the Institute's Certificate of Professional Development. The benchmark for all our engagement activity is the National Standards for Community Engagement. This consultation training will also help our employees to work to the National Standards.
- 2.4** During 2008-09 and 2009-10, 63 employees took part in a range of training. 32 of these participants completed courses to gain the Consultation Institute's Certificate of Professional Development including four staff from partner organisations.

#### **3. Main Issues**

- 3.1** During 2010-11, 36 employees took part in training, bringing the total number of employees who have undertaken training to 77. Four of these also completed the Certificate of Professional Development (CPD), bringing the number of CPD holders to 37. Courses are practical and interactive in style. They included:

- Making Consultation Meaningful: covering *stakeholder mapping* and *consultation methods*

- Consultation Before and After: how to *plan* and take forward a consultation from start to finish – including the important stages of *feedback* and *evaluation*
- Evaluating Public Engagement: looking at the growing need for evaluation, and equipping staff to apply best practice principles.
- Effective Surveys & Questionnaires: a practical course on using survey techniques in the context of public and stakeholder consultations, and public engagement generally.
- Effective Public Meetings: considering key issues of Public Meetings including when and when not to hold them; attracting the right audience; minimum access requirements; briefing speakers; and handling disruptive elements.
- Effective Deliberative Events: *stakeholder conferences, roundtable forums*, and how to use them to best effect
- Effective Focus Groups: no longer the exclusive tool of market researchers and high-powered consultants - all public bodies now need to use them. This course covers all key aspects.
- Consultation and Social Media: Facebook, Twitter, and so on - now firmly established as engagement methods. This imaginative course explores the world of social media—from consultor and consultee perspectives.

- 3.2** The evaluation from the training was very positive on average giving an overall rating of 9 out of 10 for the value to participants, with comments from employees including:  
 ‘very worthwhile – a good balance of theory and practical exercises’  
 ‘Fantastic training team – open to questions and answers. Particularly helpful in my daily work’  
 ‘made me think harder about what we’d use Deliberative Events for and the need to prepare thoroughly’  
 ‘very useful – increased my understanding of the importance of evaluation as on-going part of the process’
- 3.3** A session on Consultation and Engagement was also delivered to Elected Members at the September 2010 Business Day.
- 3.4** A training needs analysis is being carried out to help plan training for 2011-12. Important considerations will be:
- to involve more employees of partner organisations (as part of the planned partner engagement strategy) and
  - to offer training to community members from the ‘responding to consultation’ perspective
- 3.5** West Dunbartonshire Council’s commitment to training on consultation and engagement was highlighted in a front page article ‘Partnership in Action’ in the recent COSLA and Improvement Service Conference and Exhibition 2011 Newsletter.
- 3.6** Following points raised at the January 2010 Senior Managers’ Session on Consultation and Engagement, a Consultation Toolkit has been developed. The Toolkit helps deliver best value requirements in a number of ways by:

- Providing comprehensive guidance on planning and carrying out consultation, providing feedback and evaluating the processes
- Establishing minimum standards
- Promoting a consistent approach in line with the National Standards for Community Engagement
- Supporting effective Equalities Impact Assessment
- Supporting the PSIF processes and contributing to continuous improvement .

The training and the Toolkit work in combination to deliver good practice.

#### **4. People Implications**

4.1 There are no personnel issues.

#### **5. Financial Implications**

5.1 Currently there are no additional financial implications.

#### **6. Risk Analysis**

6.1 There is a risk that if we don't continue to provide appropriate training and support, we may fail to deliver best practice in our consultation activities.

#### **7. Equalities, Health & Human Rights Impact Assessment (EIA)**

7.1 The training needs analysis and forward will include an Equalities Impact Assessment.

#### **8. Conclusions and Recommendations**

8.1 Members of the Committee are asked to note and comment on the arrangements outlined at points 3.1 to 3.6.

8.2 Members of the Committee are invited to ask questions.

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**David McMillan**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Date: 26 April 2011**

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**Appendices:** None

**Background Papers:** Consultation Training Arrangements, Community Participation Committee, Wednesday 17 February, 2010

**Wards Affected:** All Wards