

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Interim Executive Director of Corporate Services

Community Participation Committee

Wednesday 22 February, 2012

Subject: Consultation/Engagement Training 2011-12

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The report informs committee members about the consultation training carried out for employees during 2011-12.

2. Background

- 2.1** 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.
- 2.2** 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.
- 2.3** During 2010-11 further training has taken place to build on this. The training and evaluation and impact are described below.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** During 2011-12, 34 employees took part in training, bringing the total number of employees who have undertaken training to 96. 3 of these also completed the Certificate of Professional Development (CPD), bringing the number of CPD holders to 35. The range of participants was varied including school teachers, planners, social work and health practitioners and anti-social behaviour and community safety officers. Staff from a voluntary project and from WD Community Volunteer Service also attended. Two volunteers from the Mental Health Forum also accompanied a member of staff on the effective surveys and questionnaires course. In total 61 training places were provided. East Renfrewshire employees took places on some of the courses, to maximise cost benefits.
- 3.2** 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 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.

3.3 The evaluation from the training was very positive on average giving an overall rating of 9 out of 10 for the course content, 9 out of 10 for the trainer and 9 out of 10 for the value to participants, with comments from employees including:

‘Very useful in-service. I will use this in practice.’

‘Enjoyed the content. Will be beneficial in current job role and for the future.’

‘Very good course, delivered well. Got much more than expected – good depth of field.’

‘Exercises were relevant and straightforward. Allowed good interaction.’

‘Excellent course with very valuable information and materials which will be extremely useful in improving my practice.’

3.4 A session on Responding to Consultations was also run for Community Forum members, attended by 6 people. It covered how to decide the best way of responding, how to get views across and how to gather the views of others to inform your response. The evaluation for this was very positive with learning outcomes identified as follows:

- Very interesting training
- You will never manage to achieve all the necessary points to get a 100% consultation
- Look inward and make sure I do not have preconceived ideas – excellent workshop
- Enjoyed the light hearted way it was put forward. Learned a lot to take to my groups.
- Was impressed by the explanations of the complexities of the consultation system.
- Very good, learned a lot, well presented – be sincere not confrontational

3.5 Impact of training information was gathered from 2009-10 participants and there were several examples of improved practice in relation to training. These included improved questionnaire design and response rates, improved confidence in the evaluation process, better forward planning and establishing better communication with service users.

3.6 Executive Directors will receive a record of training showing employees who have participated and the consultation intranet will be updated with names.

3.7 Planning is underway to design the training programme for 2012-13.

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 Training is arranged in a way that is accessible to all participants and the core values of the training take into account equalities considerations. As such, there is no perceived need for a separate EIA.

8. Strategic Assessment

8.1 This work contributes to the Fit for Purpose Services Strategic Priority, by strengthening consultation practice and community engagement.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 Members of the committee are asked to note the contents of the report.

9.2 Members of the committee are invited to ask questions.

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Appendices: None

Background Papers: Consultation Training Arrangements, Community Participation Committee, Wednesday 18 May, 2011

Wards Affected: All Wards