

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Executive Director of Corporate Services

Community Participation Committee

Wednesday 22 May, 2013

Subject: Consultation/Engagement Training 2012-13

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The report informs committee members about the consultation training carried out for employees during 2012-13.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** It is recommended that the committee note the contents of the report.

3. Background

- 3.1** 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.

- 3.2** Since 2008, 96 employees have taken part in a range of training. 35 of these participants completed courses to gain the Consultation Institute's Certificate of Professional Development including six staff from partner organisations.

- 3.3** During 2012-13 further training has taken place to build on this. The training and evaluation and impact are described below.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1** During 2012-13, 64 training places were delivered to 25 participants, the majority being Council employees, with three individuals from voluntary sector organisations.

- 3.1** 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 and Facilitation Skills: 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.
- Effective Public Meetings and Deliberative Events - focuses on public meetings and the alternatives including when might it be better to run a structured Deliberative Event, a Public Exhibition or a Drop-In event.

4.2 The evaluation from the training was very positive on average giving an overall rating of 8.7 out of 10 for the course content, 9.2 out of 10 for the trainer and 8.8 out of 10 for the relevance to participants. The following provides a flavour of the feedback from employees:

- “Very informative, giving a new perspective on the requirements for a successful consultation.”
- “Outstanding course overall. Very glad to have attended.”
- “Excellent. Very informative and will enhance my own practice.”
- “Thoroughly enjoyable, very useful handouts and useful exercises. Enjoyed the pace and participatory discussions.”
- “I thought the course activities were simplified yet effective at applying to lots of types of surveys – great course.”

4.3 Impact of training information was gathered from participants and there were several examples of improved practice in relation to training including:

- “Gave a useful overview of methods of consultation and thinking about who to consult in a way to get the most from them. Generally useful when considering our next participation strategies.”
- “We have applied the lessons in relation to constructing questions within questionnaires and to answer scales.”
- “I felt better equipped to undertake the consultation comprehensively - before, during and after. I was not only able to determine the level of support for the proposed play park within the wider community, but also gained the community’s preference with regard to the type of play equipment they wished to be installed and able to address any concerns highlighted.”
- “It has improved my understanding of the range of methods which can be used, the importance of ensuring thorough processes are used and giving feedback .”
- “It widened my thinking in terms of being more creative with methods/tools to use””and it has given me clarity around the meaning of ‘consultation’ and ‘information sharing’ – we often badge the latter as the former.”

4.4 Executive Directors will receive a record of training showing employees who have participated.

5. People Implications

5.1 There are no personnel issues.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 Training was delivered within budget. Providing the training in-house is cost effective and a significant saving over staff attending the Consultation Institute national courses.

7. Risk Analysis

7.1 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.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

8.1 Training is arranged in a way that is accessible to all participants and the core values of the training take into account equalities considerations. An EIA has been carried out and is available as a background paper.

9. Consultation

9.1 Before developing the training programme, an exercise is carried out to identify training needs.

10. Strategic Assessment

10.1 This work helps deliver on the strategic aim to improve the well-being of communities and protect the welfare of vulnerable people.

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Appendices: None

Background Papers: Consultation Training Arrangements, Community Participation Committee, Wednesday 22 May, 2012
Equality Impact Assessment, Consultation Training Arrangements

Wards Affected: All wards.