

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Chief Executive

Corporate Services Committee : 28 November 2006

Subject: Preparations for Elected Member Development – 2007 and Beyond

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to seek Committee approval for the preparations to be made for the training and development of Elected Members in the run up to and following the 2007 Elections.

2. Background

- 2.1** The Committee will be aware that the new Council to be elected in 2007 will be elected by the single transferable vote method of proportional representation, with the individual Council wards having either three or four Elected Members. The new electoral system will involve considerable organisational change. Intensive advance preparations will be essential to guide the Council through the new legislative provisions and ensure that systems suitable to the new working arrangements are in place for the Council and Elected Members in May 2007.
- 2.2** Audit Scotland has recently commented upon leadership development for Elected Members. The existing arrangements for Elected Member Development are outlined in a report approved by the Personnel Sub-Committee on 19 April 2000. A standing list of conferences and seminars for Elected Members has also been approved and the Council has given authority to approve Members' attendance at other courses.

3. Main Issues

Induction Training

- 3.1** All new Councillors will be provided with an Induction Information Pack and Induction Training as soon as reasonably possible after the May 2007 Elections. The induction pack and training will cover areas such as:-

- Personal Arrangements for Councillors.
- General Council structures.
- Legal issues (including policy development, decision making and scrutiny).
- Financial Issues.
- Regulatory Issues.
- The Council as an employer - Personnel issues.

- The Corporate Policy context.
- National Issues.

3.2 The Improvement Service are also preparing an Induction Pack and the Head of Legal and Administrative Services is liaising with them to ensure that there is conformity between the Pack prepared by the Improvement Service and the Council's Induction Information Pack.

Financial and Legal Issues

3.3 Immediately following upon the local authority elections, Elected Members will be issued with information from the Head of Legal and Administrative Services and the Head of Finance. This will provide Councillors with information on:-

- Code of Conduct for Councillors.
- Statutory Rules on financial and other interests.
- Prohibition on voting - Arrears of Council Tax etc.
- The establishment of political groups.
- Standing Orders of the Council.
- Financial Regulations etc.

3.4 Some of this information will be developed through the induction training but the information provided by the respective Heads of Service necessarily requires to be provided to Elected Members following their election and a number of documents require to be completed and lodged with the Council (e.g. Declaration of Acceptance of Office, Registration of Interests Form etc.).

3.5 In addition, Members will be issued with an information pack outlining the scheme for reimbursement of expenses. This will include information on the approved list of duties, guidance on the scheme for reimbursement of travel, subsistence and telephone expenses and the Members' register of expenses. As from 3 May 2007, it is proposed that councillors will have access to a pension scheme. Although proposals are still in draft form, if enacted, information will be supplied to councillors regarding their eligibility to join the scheme.

Training for Elected Members on Planning

3.6 The statutory code for Councillors produced by the Standards Commission for Scotland contains a section related to planning matters; this follows previous advice prepared by COSLA. COSLA, the Royal Town Planning Institute, the Scottish Society of Directors of Planning and the Scottish Executive have developed a training framework for Councillors which relates specifically to planning. Scottish Planning Policy 1: The Planning System refers to these documents in stressing the importance of training in relation to planning matters. This relates to all Councillors whether or not they are on the Planning Committee.

- 3.7** In house training on planning matters has been undertaken in the past, based on the framework mentioned above. However, the Improvement Service, COSLA and the Scottish Executive are jointly commissioning the preparation of an Induction Pack for Elected Members on Planning. The pack will be provided free of charge to all planning authorities, and will be designed to be supplemented with detailed information on local arrangements. The Induction Pack is intended to be a basis for training for new Elected Members on planning. The Planning Development Programme will also fund trainers to deliver the induction sessions for those authorities that request this support.
- 3.8** The induction pack will explain processes in the existing statutory planning system but will discuss roles and responsibilities in the context of the modernised system following enactment of the Planning Bill. The pack will be the first stage in a development programme for Elected Members. A series of workshops will be run towards the end of 2007 to explain the modernised system for Elected Members, and training events on specific topics such as design will be promoted.

Training for Elected Members on Licensing

- 3.9** The new Council will be required to appoint Members to serve on West Dunbartonshire Licensing Board. In accordance with the provisions of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005, appropriate training will be provided to Board Members in order that they may consider applications for licences for the sale of alcohol, and related matters. In addition, training will be provided to Board Members with respect to the provisions of the Gambling Act 2005 and the consideration of applications for licences for premises where gambling is offered. Training will also be provided to Members of the Licensing Committee on the consideration of applications under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982.

IT Training for Elected Members

- 3.10** A learning plan of ICT Training opportunities will be made available for Elected Members. The learning plan will include workshops on the following topics:-

- Introduction to Basic Computing
- Understanding File Management
- Introduction to the Internet
- Understanding E-Mail

- 3.11** This training can be further expanded to include additional ICT training opportunities, which will be provided to support individual learning needs. These range from word processing workshops to fully recognised ICT qualifications such as e-Citizen and the European Computer Driving Licence.

Personal Development for Elected Members

3.12 The role of an Elected Member is a demanding one, and it is important that a range of learning and development opportunities, not only to support and enhance their role but also to build on their skills, knowledge and competence is available either in-house or through external provision. The following areas should be considered as part of a personal development programme for Elected Members and should be linked to a personal needs analysis to identify specific programmes for individuals:-

- Performance Appraisal Training
- Risk Management
- Procurement
- Recruitment and Selection
- Appeals Board
- Handling aggression and personal safety
- Presentation skills
- Speed-reading
- Chairing meetings
- Time Management
- Media Awareness

3.13 The above training should be incorporated into a formalised training programme to allow Members to plan well ahead. The training needs to be focused on where a need has been identified by Members themselves. Training and development is a continual process. Planned training allows Members to arrange other commitments but it would still have the flexibility to adapt and change as new challenges appear. To ensure the effectiveness of a training programme for Members, an evaluation process would be used, and all Members would be asked to provide feedback following any training and development that they attend.

Training on Protocols and Practices for Multi-Member Wards

3.14 The Council will develop an initial set of protocols and procedures in relation to Elected Members' roles in the new multi-ward structure, and it is anticipated that there will be guidance available at a national level. Training on these initial arrangements will be included in induction training referred to in 3.1 above. Subsequent development in protocols and procedures will be included in ongoing training for Elected Members, and included in the training needs analysis referred to in 3.15 below.

Training on the Councillor's Role

3.15 Some elements of the Councillor's role will be addressed in induction training and in the Induction Information Pack. These include Council's Standing Orders and Elected Members' roles on outside bodies. Further requirements will be identified in a training needs analysis to be carried out following the election of the new Council.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** The foregoing arrangements will have a number of Personnel implications but a comprehensive package of training for Elected Members is essential.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** Financial provision for training costs will be included within budget estimates, although the ongoing costs for training and development will require to be kept under review.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1** Some of the training arrangements which will be put in place for Elected Members will be compulsory but, in general terms, all Elected Members require to ensure that their individual development needs are being met through a comprehensive training package arranged by the Council. The training provisions outlined in this report will be reviewed in the run up to and following the May 2007 elections and further reports will be provided to Elected Members as necessary.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1** **The Committee is invited to agree the preparations which have been put in place for Elected Member Development.**

David McMillan
Chief Executive
Date: 15 November 2006

Wards Affected: All

Background Papers: Report to the Personnel Sub-Committee on 19 April 2000.

Standing List of Conferences and Seminars.

Induction Information Pack

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