

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Chief Executive

Council Meeting: 16 May 2007

Subject: Elected Member Training

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Council on the opportunities that will be made available to Elected Members to provide them with the range of skills, knowledge and competence required to assist them carry out their duties.

2. Background

- 2.1 West Dunbartonshire Council recognises that effective Member Development is essential to ensure that Councillors update their knowledge and learn new skills so that they can carry out their role effectively.
- 2.2 Training and development opportunities have been offered to Elected Members previously, but they have been limited and have not been targeted through a formal needs analysis and development programme.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1 Recent guidance issued by the Scottish Executive states that:-

Each councillor should, within a reasonable timescale after being elected:-

- Have a role description in a format determined by the council
- Have participated in a training needs assessment
- Have a personal development plan

- 3.2 By using a training needs analysis approach, West Dunbartonshire will develop a training and development programme that will meet the needs of Elected Members.

- 3.3 This programme will not only equip Elected Members to carry out their roles and responsibilities, but it will also enable them to build on, and develop their skills, knowledge and competence. The individual training elements within the programme will be delivered in-house or through external provision.

- 3.4 The following topics should be considered as integral parts of a personal development programme for Elected Members and would be linked to specific programmes for individuals. A number of these topics will be expanded later in the report (*).

- Personal development (*)
- Leadership development
- Regulatory training and development (*)
- Ethical Standards (*)
- Financial and legal issues
- ICT training

3.5. Personal Development

Personal development programmes will be identified for all Elected Members after completion of a training needs analysis, but will cover some or all of the following topics:-

- Performance Appraisal
- Risk management
- Procurement
- Recruitment and Selection
- Council appeals procedure
- Handling aggression and personal safety
- Presentation Skills
- Speed-reading
- Media Skills
- Time Management
- Project management

3.6 Regulatory Training

Local authorities are not just service providers, they also act as regulators. This involves Councillors in quasi-judicial roles on special committees appointed directly by the Council, such as those for planning and licensing. To meet the requirements of membership of these committees, special training will be arranged for relevant for Councillors.

3.6.1 Licensing Committee

The Council's Civic Government Licensing Section processes applications for various types of licences in terms of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, including applications for taxi licences, street traders licences, market operators licences, public entertainment licences, etc.

The Council's Environmental Services Division processes applications for other types of licences, such as Animal Boarding Establishments, Dangerous Wild Animals, Zoo licences, Houses in Multiple Occupation, etc. in terms of the relevant legislation.

The vast majority of applications are dealt with by officers under delegated powers. However, where an objection or representation has been received in relation to an application, or an application is deemed to be controversial in any way, such applications are referred to the Licensing Committee for determination.

It is proposed that training will be provided for Members on the procedures which are followed when hearings are held to determine applications for licences.

3.6.2 Licensing Board

Although West Dunbartonshire Licensing Board is a separate legal entity from West Dunbartonshire Council, the Membership of the Board is constituted from Members of the Council.

The Licensing Board is responsible for licensing with respect to alcoholic liquor and gambling.

In terms of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005, there is a statutory requirement for Members of the Licensing Board to undertake training before considering liquor licensing applications and associated matters. A national specification for training of Licensing Board Members has been developed and it has been agreed that all training should include three key areas:-

1. An understanding of the quasi-judicial process, including an understanding of the legislation;
2. Understanding the context, including their role and remit; and
3. Policy formulation.

Training in relation to 1 and 2 above will be provided by trainers accredited by the Scottish Qualifications Authority and competency will be assessed by way of a multiple choice examination paper.

Training in respect of policy formulation is to be provided locally by each individual Licensing Board. Appropriate arrangements will be made in this regard.

It is also proposed that a training session will be provided for Members of the Licensing Board on the provisions of the Gambling Act 2005, dealing with applications for licences from individuals or organisations who wish to provide facilities for gambling within premises.

3.6.3 Training for Planning Matters

The Induction Pack commissioned jointly by the Improvement Service, COSLA and the Scottish Executive is now being prepared and will be available to Elected Members. An introductory workshop based on this Pack is being delivered by external Consultants commissioned by the Improvement Service through the Planning and Development Programme. This workshop will focus on providing Elected Members with a general briefing on:-

- Their roles and responsibilities within the planning system.
- The main elements of the current statutory planning system.
- The Councillor Code of Conduct and probity issues relating to planning.

The workshop is taking place at the Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton on the morning of Wednesday 23 May 2007, and is open to all Elected Members and in particular those on the Planning Committee. The workshop is the first stage in a Development Programme for Elected Members. Following enactment of the Planning Bill a series of workshops will run towards the end of 2007 to explain the modernised system for Elected Members and training events on specific topics will be provided.

3.7 Ethical Standards Training

Members of the public have high expectations of Councillors and the way they conduct themselves whilst undertaking Council business. In support of this, The Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000 established a framework to ensure that the highest standards of behaviour were maintained by local authority Councillors and members (such as board members) of certain public bodies. It introduced Codes of Conduct which Councillors and members must comply with at all times in their duties.

The Code of Conduct for Elected Members has been revised and now makes specific reference to training that should be undertaken by all Councillors on ethical standards.

The training will be planned to ensure that all Councillors have the opportunity to attend a session before the end of September 2007, and will cover the following topics; the ethical framework – including the Act, the relevant Code of Conduct and the enforcement regime.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** A personal development programme for Elected Members will have a number of personnel implications, particularly those related to in-house delivery. Specialist areas of training will be planned and delivered by individuals who have in-depth subject knowledge and expertise either from within the Council, or by an external provider e.g. planning, licensing, ICT and Appeals Committee.

4.2 The training needs analysis, delivery of a range of personal development programmes and the overall facilitation of learning and development opportunities will be undertaken by the Employee Development Team.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 Provision for any training and development costs are included within current budget provisions, but will require to be closely monitored.

6. Risk Analysis

6.1 There was no requirement for a risk assessment to be carried out on the proposals contained in this report.

7. Conclusions

7.1 The training and development arrangements for Elected Members contain both compulsory and non-compulsory elements. However, the main emphasis on the programme overall is to ensure that the individual needs of all Elected Members are identified and then met through a personal development programme.

8. Recommendations

8.1 Members are requested to consider and approve this report.

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Date: 10 May 2007

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Appendices: There are no appendices attached to the report.

Background Papers: There are no background papers.

Wards Affected: All Council Wards.