

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PANEL

21 APRIL 2004

Chair: * Councillor Ann Groves

Councillors: Jean Lammiman * Marie-Louise Nolan
* Miss Lyne

* Denotes Member present

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS**RECOMMENDATION 1: Annual Development Programme**

Your Panel received a report from the Executive Director, Organisational Development, which detailed the evaluation of the 2003/04 programme and presented the provisional Member Development Programme for 2004/05. The Training and Development Manager advised the Panel that both Members and officers had been consulted over the 2004/05 programme in order for all views to be taken into account.

Your Panel were asked to consider the training sessions detailed in the Provisional Member Development Programme for 2004/05. The Schools Admissions Policy session was felt to be of considerable importance, given that the subject forms a great deal of Members casework and that changes to schools admissions had recently taken affect. Members agreed that holding training sessions on 12 & 13 July 2004 would cause problems in terms of attendance. The Panel heard that as part of the CPA Action Plan, Members were required to undergo media training. Therefore it was decided to move the Waste Management session to later in the year. The Training and Development Manager advised that she would consult with the relevant officer to arrange an alternative date. Members also agreed that the Human Resources Strategy session should be moved to a later date in the year. Members agreed to move the session on the Future Role of Local Government from 21 September to 29 September in order to avoid a clash with the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee. The Licensing session, previously scheduled for 29 September, would be re-arranged at a more appropriate time following consultation with the relevant officer. Members agreed that the first Directorate Overview session would remain on 5 October. It was felt that letters from the relevant Executive Directors would encourage Members to attend. The Panel felt that attendance at the Code of Conduct session was imperative and hoped that all Members would be able to attend one of the sessions.

It was agreed that the session on Special Educational Needs (SEN) would be re-arranged for 5 January 2005. It was further agreed that Local Government Finance would not be held on 19 January 2005 but would rather be moved to another date in January. Members were advised that the Public Speaking session would be taken out of the programme and replaced by one-to-one coaching from an external consultant. The Training and Development Manager noted that Leadership and Development Programme, scheduled to be held on 1 and 3 March 2005, would be similar to the 2003/04 course, although new ideas would be sought in order to improve participation.

Your Panel also requested that a number of sessions be re-named in order to increase their appeal and help to illustrate their importance to Members.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to the Standards Committee)

That, subject to the above amendments, the Provisional 2004/05 Member Development Programme be approved.

(See also Minute 121).

PART II - MINUTES114. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at this meeting.

115. **Declarations of Interest:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members in relation to the business transacted at this meeting.

116. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

RESOLVED: That all items be considered with the press and public present.

117. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the signing of the minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2004 be deferred until printed in the next Council Bound Minute Volume.

118. **Public Questions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put at the meeting under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 18 (Part 4B of the Constitution).

119. **Petitions:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no petitions to be received at this meeting under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 15 (Part 4B of the Constitution).

120. **Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received at the meeting under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 16 (Part 4B of the Constitution).

121. **Annual Development Programme:**

The Panel received a report from the Executive Director, Organisational Development, which included details of the 2003/04 evaluation and the Provisional Member Development Programme for 2004/05.

Members were advised that the problem of low attendance had been particularly evident at a number of training events throughout the 2003/04 programme. Members were invited to express their opinions on how to address the problem of low attendance. It was noted that poor attendance at some training events was symptomatic of the four-year Council cycle. This factor coupled with other commitments, including Council meetings and Outside Body meetings, were thought to make poor attendance inevitable to some extent.

The Chair pointed out that the results of the questionnaire were pleasing in that Members were still asking for a wide array of training events to be included in the programme. Members were also asked to consider that training events, which returned poor attendance figures were wasteful in terms of officers' time and resources, particularly given the added costs of catering and outside speakers. A further problem was identified in that Members often did not indicate that they were unable to attend a session they had previously committed to. It was felt that Members should be persuaded to see the benefits of attending such sessions, particularly as they provide an opportunity to engage senior officers on crucial local issues. This was thought to be of added importance, given the number of sessions in the 2004/05 programme that would deal with recent changes within the Council. The Panel agreed that Members should raise the issue of attendance at their respective group meetings in order to make them aware of the importance of Member training. The Training and Development Manager advised the Panel that the Area Director, People First, had written directly to Members informing them of a training event on 6 May 2004. It was agreed that letters from senior officers would be an effective way of increasing attendance and it was hoped that the event would see improved attendance.

The Chair suggested that the Panel write a covering letter to all Members, with the draft 2004/05 programme, stressing the importance of Member training and detailing the reasons why.

RESOLVED: That (1) a covering letter with the 2004/05 Member Development Programme be sent to all Members on behalf of the Panel, stressing the importance of Member training; and

(2) prior to each training session, the senior officer involved, be asked to write to Members in order to advise them to attend.

(See also Recommendation 1).

122. **Update on the Leadership Programme:**

Despite the disappointing attendance at the recent Leadership and Development Programme, the Chair felt that the sessions were informative and wished to extend the Panel's thanks to Steve Rogers of INLOGOV. A central theme of the two sessions was

that of Community Leadership. It was noted that this was closely linked to the increasing degree of public engagement that was expected of Members. The newly introduced Safer Neighbourhood Schemes were noted as an example. Therefore such sessions were thought essential in order to provide Members with sufficient confidence to deal with a wide range of queries from their constituents.

RESOLVED: That the above be noted.

123.

Any Other Business:

The Panel heard that the second Member session on scrutiny, conducted by an outside speaker, had been very disappointing and failed to meet Members needs. A complaint had been made to the company, who had subsequently offered a free session. Members noted that the speaker had been briefed by a number of officers and Members, but had failed to take note.

The Chair informed Members that a Portfolio Holder had attended an external training event on Local Government Finance. Following consultation with the Executive Director, Organisational Development, payment for the course had been authorised retrospectively. It was noted that this was an exception and any further such requests would be declined. A letter was to be sent to Members reminding them of the correct procedure and reiterating that retrospective payments would not be accepted.

The Corporate Solicitor distributed a copy of *A Guide for Councillors Serving on Outside Bodies*. The Chair thanked the officer for this helpful guidance.

RESOLVED: That the above be noted.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 5.30 pm, closed at 6.45 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR ANN GROVES
Chair