

Meeting:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	29 July 2008
Subject:	Scrutiny Member Development Programme - Evaluation of 2007/08 programme and draft programme for 2008/09
Responsible Officer:	Tom Whiting, Assistant Chief Executive
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Paul Osborn – Performance, Communication and Corporate Services
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	None

## Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out an evaluation of last year's Scrutiny Member Development Programme (2007/08) and provides a draft outline of the programme for this year (2008/09).

### **Recommendations:**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to;

1. Consider the evaluation of last year's scrutiny member development programme
2. Consider the draft programme for this year and offer comments/suggestions for inclusion in developing the scrutiny member development programme 2008/09.
3. Agree to the Scrutiny Team progressing with the delivery of the programme for 2008/09.

### **Reason: (For recommendation)**

To allow the progression of the Scrutiny Member Development Programme for 2008/09.

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **Background and current situation**

#### **Scrutiny Member Development Programme 2007/2008 – Activities and Evaluation**

During the 2007/08 municipal year, especially given the reconfiguration of scrutiny structures, it has been important to consolidate the changes to the scrutiny function, members' roles and responsibilities within it, as well as their knowledge of specific subject areas. The scrutiny member development programme has addressed these needs through various means, as detailed below. All of the internal sessions have been delivered using in-house resources. Any additional costs have been met by the corporate member development budget.

#### **1) Generic Scrutiny Training Session**

These sessions were held for all councillors on:

- ✓ 18 October 2007 – attended by 23 councillors and co-optees
- ✓ 30 January 2008 (repeat session) – attended by 8 councillors

The sessions aimed to reinforce the fundamental principles of scrutiny in Harrow, inform members about the changes in scrutiny and the rationale behind this and also engage members in exploring ways to take the new look scrutiny forward including issues around work programming. The sessions were well received and sparked open discussions following the scrutiny reconfiguration, facilitated by groupwork exercises. About half of the member core attended one of these sessions and comments on evaluation forms highlighted the value members placed on having the opportunity to talk to peers in an informal setting.

#### **2) Scrutiny subject-specific briefings**

These briefings were aimed primarily at all scrutiny councillors and co-optees:

- ✓ Performance and Finance Training Session on 23 October 2007 – delivered by teams within Strategy and Improvement Team, attended by 12 scrutiny councillors who are members/reserves of the new Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee
- ✓ Briefing on children's issues on 15 November 2007 – including a presentation from the Corporate Director of Children's Services and attended by 19 councillors/co-optees.
- ✓ Briefing on health issues on 4 February 2008 – delivered by colleagues from Harrow Primary Care Trust to 13 councillors, co-optees and a non-executive director of the PCT Board.

The briefings and training sessions were more specialised than the generic scrutiny session. The performance and finance session looked to develop some of the key knowledge and skills needed for the new scrutiny sub-committee. The briefing sessions provided an outline of key issues relating to the subject area (local and national policy developments) and sought to develop

members' understanding of how the new scrutiny structure could facilitate scrutiny of these policy areas. A further session on Councillor Call for Action and community safety had originally been included as part of the scrutiny member development programme however this may now be opened out to the full member core at a later date, pending legislation.

Evaluation of the sessions highlighted how useful members found these sessions with a call for future briefings on subject areas as relevant/timely. The presentation and format of the briefing on children's issues particularly received favourable comments from members and co-optees. The briefing on health issues included attendance by the portfolio holder and a non-executive from the PCT Board and this added depth to discussions.

### **3) London Scrutiny Network learning events**

Over the past year the London Scrutiny Network has run a series of learning events, funded by Capital Ambition. These have been open to all scrutiny councillors:

- ✓ 14 December 2007 – Councillor Call for Action (hosted by LB Merton), including a presentation delivered by one of Harrow's Scrutiny Officers
- ✓ 28 February 2008 – Raising the profile of scrutiny through budget scrutiny (hosted by LB Hounslow), including a presentation delivered by Harrow's Scrutiny's Lead for Children and Young People (Performance).
- ✓ 8 April 2008 - Councillors as Community Leaders' (hosted by LB Hillingdon)

### **4) IDeA's National Councillor Mentoring Programme**

Funded by Capital Ambition, places were available for scrutiny councillors on the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) national councillor mentoring programme. This work focuses on role mentoring work with a small group of councillors (13 members in total including two scrutiny members) and uses an accredited peer councillor mentor with an action-learning approach.

### **5) Scrutiny Away Day**

On 2 April 2008, a Scrutiny Away Day for members was held at the Healthy Living Centre in Wealdstone. Six of the scrutiny leads attended and identified a number of issues they would like to see addressed in the forthcoming year. Some of these related to training needs and the draft programme for 2008/09 seeks to address these.

### **6) Briefings for Scrutiny Lead Members**

Throughout the year, scrutiny lead members have received written and verbal briefings from the Scrutiny Team on policies and developments in their subject areas. In addition, quarterly briefings with the relevant Corporate Directors have been arranged. Although not primarily aimed as 'scrutiny member development', these have nonetheless helped to support members' new roles as scrutiny leads and champions for their subject areas.

### ***Identifying future training needs***

Following the generic training session and each of the subject-specific briefings, attendees were asked to complete evaluation forms. This feedback is important in helping identify areas of success and those for improvement, as well as other possible development areas that could be delivered by the Scrutiny Member Development Programme. Further, there was feedback from members at the Scrutiny Away Day as to additional areas which the programme in 2008/09 could address to improve the scrutiny function.

Drawing together all this feedback received from members and co-optees, the following areas have been identified to address in terms of developing scrutiny members' skills and roles:

- Clarifying and developing the understanding of scrutiny roles especially that of lead members, including raising their profile
- Enhancing skills in desktop research, methodologies and other analytical skills
- Targeting recommendations in order to assert scrutiny's influencing role
- Developing sufficient expertise to deliver effective challenge including technical knowledge to enable scrutiny members to ask the right questions of witnesses
- Developing a 'team spirit' for scrutiny – helping maintain scrutiny's non-partisan approach to issues under review
- Progressing leadership and facilitation skills in leading committees and reviews and members briefings to peers on areas of their expertise
- Continuing to build relationships between scrutiny and internal/external partners

## **Draft outline of Scrutiny Member Development Programme 2008/2009**

### ***Carrying forward momentum of last year's programme***

#### **1) Generic Scrutiny Sessions**

There appears no need for the whole scrutiny member core to repeat these workshops as they were one-off training sessions to consolidate the reconfigured scrutiny structure. It is suggested that any members new to scrutiny or a scrutiny lead role receive 1:1 support from officers as well as peer support.

#### **2) Scrutiny subject-specific briefings**

It is suggested that there be a refresh session on scrutiny's role in performance and finance monitoring. This would be aimed primarily at members of the Performance and Finance sub-Committee, however should be open to all scrutiny members. Building on last year's session, the focus should be more on how performance reporting fits into corporate structures, finance and the target setting process.

#### **3) London Scrutiny Network learning events**

The series of learning events run by the London Scrutiny Network continues and again these are open to all scrutiny councillors:

- 20 June – Joint authority scrutiny (hosted by LB Havering)
- September (date tbc) – Scrutiny of performance management (hosted by LB Lambeth)

- November (date tbc) – Scrutinising partnerships (hosted by LB Tower Hamlets)

#### **4) IDeA's National Councillor Mentoring Programme**

Roffey Park was commissioned to run a pilot of the member coaching programme. The pilot included 13 members (two of whom were scrutiny councillors) and was underpinned by the IDeA political skills framework.

A report evaluating the pilot has been produced and the key areas of development needs identified should be integrated into the corporate member development programme as it is developed. The four principal development themes that emerged for members were:

- Public speaking / presentation skills
- Personal organisation and prioritisation of workloads
- Understanding the bigger picture in which the Council operates
  - this addresses the ability to make effective linkages between central government policy and the implication for Harrow, and would therefore tie in with the policy briefings provided for scrutiny members as well as having implications for the development of scrutiny lead members' roles.
- Communication in the community

Some of the other development needs identified through the Roffey Park work have strong resonance with needs identified through last year's scrutiny training e.g. how to scrutinise effectively, networking skills, managing conflict and influencing effectively, leadership development and chairing meetings. It is therefore crucial that the scrutiny member development plans tie in with the wider corporate member development plans. Indeed the Roffey Park report explicitly recommends and reinforces the need for more training in scrutiny.

#### **5) Scrutiny Away Day**

It is recommended to continue holding regular Away Days as these provide an opportunity for members and officers to informally discuss and develop the scrutiny function.

#### **6) Briefings for Scrutiny Lead Members**

It is recommended that these continue as they provide vital support to the scrutiny lead member role.

#### ***New activities for 2008/09***

The corporate member development programme is currently being developed and there are plans to integrate the Scrutiny Member Development Programme into the corporate member-wide programme co-ordinated by the Learning and Development Team. It will need to be ensured that the two programmes complement each other, are comprehensive and co-ordinated and that duplication of efforts is avoided.

Based on the feedback from last year's programme, the aims and objectives identified for the Scrutiny Member Development Programme 2008/09 are given below. Table 1 suggests ways in which these training and development needs can be delivered.

- 1) **TEAMS** To develop a team spirit for scrutiny
- 2) **EXPERTISE** To develop sufficient expertise and technical knowledge to deliver effective challenge
- 3) **ROLES** To consolidate the scrutiny structure and clarify the understanding of the roles within it e.g. scrutiny leads and scrutiny chairmen/ vice-chairmen
- 4) **LEADERSHIP** To develop leadership and facilitation skills
- 5) **RESEARCH** To enhance research and analytical skills
- 6) **INFLUENCE** To assert scrutiny's influencing role by targeting recommendations
- 7) **RELATIONSHIPS** To build relationships both externally with partner organisations and internally with officers and the Executive

**Table 1: Draft Scrutiny Member Development Programme of activities for 2008/09**

	<b>SUGGESTED TIMEFRAME</b>	<b>AIM/OBJECTIVE:</b> 1) <b>TEAM:</b> To develop a team spirit for scrutiny	<b>2) EXPERTISE:</b> To develop sufficient expertise and technical knowledge to deliver effective challenge	<b>3) ROLES:</b> To consolidate the scrutiny structure and clarify the understanding of the roles within it e.g. scrutiny leads and scrutiny chairmen/ vice-chairmen	<b>4) LEADERSHIP:</b> To develop leadership and facilitation skills	<b>5) RESEARCH:</b> To enhance research and analytical skills	<b>6) INFLUENCE:</b> To assert scrutiny's influencing role by targeting recommendations	<b>7) RELATIONSHIPS:</b> To build relationships externally with partner organisations and internally with officers and the Executive
A) Hold Scrutiny Away Days every six months, to facilitate opportunities for informal discussions between members to develop an effective scrutiny function	Sept/Oct 2008 and Mar/Apr 2009	☺		☺	☺			
B) Run subject-specific briefing on performance and finance issues - refresh training session aimed at members of the Performance and Finance Sub-Committee	Summer / Autumn 2008	☺	☺	☺		☺	☺	
C) Continue to attend London Scrutiny Network learning events	Calendar of events for 2008		☺				☺	☺
D) Invite an outside agency (for example the Centre for Public Scrutiny) to facilitate team-building sessions with the scrutiny leads and other scrutiny committee members/co-optees	Autumn 2008	☺		☺	☺	☺	☺	☺

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E) Hold sessions prior to committee meetings where committee members/co-optees can discuss their questioning strategies for forthcoming issues. Scrutiny leads would be expected to lead on issues in their areas of expertise and brief fellow committee members accordingly.	Before each committee meeting as appropriate	☺	☺	☺	☺		☺	
F) Hold some committee meetings outside of the Civic Centre (in community settings) as relevant to the issues under discussion on the agenda. Other boroughs have found that this encourages the forging of a team spirit and strategic style of questioning that can be transferred to committee meetings	As and when appropriate	☺						☺
G) Use mentoring/peer support to scrutiny members, provided either internally or externally	Throughout 2008/09		☺	☺	☺			
H) Use the London Scrutiny Members' Network as an opportunity for networking and discussing shared issues	LSN calendar of		☺	☺	☺		☺	☺



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with fellow councillors with similar responsibilities	quarterly meetings							
I) Observe scrutiny committees in action in other boroughs – including chairing techniques, committee styles, questioning techniques, general good practice	As and when the opportunities arise			☺	☺	☺	☺	
J) Attend the Centre for Public Scrutiny annual conference and member/officer development day	10 and 11 June 2008			☺	☺	☺	☺	☺
K) Take up other opportunities for training and development offered through central government departments and national agencies such as the London Scrutiny Network (London Councils), Local Government Information Unit, Inlogov	As and when the opportunities arise		☺	☺		☺		☺
L) Briefings for Scrutiny Lead Members – written/verbal briefings from scrutiny Team in addition to Quarterly Briefings with the relevant Corporate Directors	Throughout 2008/09		☺	☺				☺

## **Why a change is needed**

Not appropriate to this report.

## **Main options**

Not appropriate to this report.

## **Other options considered**

Not appropriate to this report.

## **Implications of the Recommendation:**

### ***Considerations***

### **Resources, costs and risks**

Costs associated with the Scrutiny Member Development Programme will be contained within the corporate member development budget held by the Learning and Development Team.

### **Staffing/workforce**

The Scrutiny Member Development Programme will be delivered using in-house resources wherever appropriate. This will draw mainly on resources from the Scrutiny Team but may also ask officer time of colleagues in Strategy and Improvement, Learning and Development, as well as the wider service departments.

### **Equalities impact**

It will be endeavoured at all times that the Scrutiny Member Development Programme is sensitive to and respect equalities issues and the needs of all those attending and delivering the sessions.

### **Legal comments**

*Awaiting advice of colleagues in Legal.*

### **Community safety (s17 Crime & Disorder Act 1998)**

There are no specific community safety issues directly related to this report.

## **Financial Implications**

Activities within the Scrutiny Member Development Programme 2008/09 will be delivered in the most cost-neutral manner using in-house resources wherever appropriate. Additional costs will be covered within the corporate member development budget held by the Learning and Development Team. For 2008/09 the member development budget is £50k.

## **Performance Issues**

Current KPI's and Likely impact of decision on KPI's

Scrutiny performance management issues

Recommendations matrix attached as appropriate

n/a
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## **Risk Implications**

Key risks and opportunities:

1. The success of the Scrutiny Member Development Programme will depend heavily on members' engagement and commitment to attending the sessions organised for them.
2. Without the Programme, many of the training/development needs that members have identified will go unaddressed.
3. Having this Programme fully embedded in corporate processes, including in the corporate member development programme, presents the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge in councillors which will make the scrutiny function and democracy in Harrow more effective.

### Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Jennifer Hydari	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 9 July 2008		
Name: Sharon Clarke	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 8 July 2008		

### Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Nahreen Matlib, Senior Professional - Scrutiny  
[nahreen.matlib@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:nahreen.matlib@harrow.gov.uk) / 020 8420 9204

Background Papers: None

If appropriate, does the report include the following considerations?

1.	Consultation	YES / NO
2.	Corporate Priorities	YES / NO