

REPORT TO CABINET

REPORT OF: Chief Executive

REPORT NO. CEX272

DATE: 7th February 2005

TITLE:	Training Programme for Members of Development and Scrutiny Panels
COUNCIL AIMS/PORTFOLIO HOLDER NAME AND DESIGNATION:	Leader Organisational Development
CORPORATE PRIORITY:	All
CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS:	This would ensure that Members of DSP understand the Council's obligations under this legislation.
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT IMPLICATIONS:	This would ensure that Members of the DSPs understand the FOI requirements.
BACKGROUND PAPERS:	None

Introduction

The Council's CPA report made a number of comments regarding the development needs and capacity of Councillors

"There is limited capacity among some members. The age profile is high and some non-executive members are having difficulties with their changed roles. PDCs are ineffective, and are operating as traditional committees rather than carrying out effective scrutiny and policy development. However, there is a lack of support and development to assist councillors in the transition from a traditional committee structure to a modern cabinet and scrutiny approach. There has been no training and development programme to enable councillors to carry out this role effectively, so councillors have been unable to develop the skills required."

These concerns were repeated in other parts of the report:

“At the time of this inspection, the councillacked a strategic and methodical approach to identifying training and development needs of both councillors and staff, and addressing these”

These concerns were reinforced in the letter from the Council’s external auditor received in December 2004 and concerning the 2003/4 annual audit. This letter identifies six actions needed by the Council, one of which is further member training and development.

In the light of these important concerns members of Scrutiny Committees were asked to consider their own training and development needs and these are summarised on the document attached as Appendix A. Whilst all the issues included in this schedule are important to the development of non-executive members, taken together they do not provide the robust and comprehensive training and development programme envisaged by the assessors in their report.

With the knowledge of hindsight, it is easy to recognise that individual members of Scrutiny and Development Committees face considerable difficulties in identifying their own needs. In the absence of considerable experience of effective scrutiny this becomes an almost impossible task. The Council is seeking to progress towards excellence at a rapid rate. It will not be able to achieve this if members of DSPs are not provided with the training and assistance they need to carry out their roles effectively. Of even greater concern is of course that, if they are not properly developed, they will be failing the communities of the District.

In recognition of the extent of the weaknesses revealed by the CPA report, and the comparatively recent introduction of effective scrutiny arrangements into the authority, the Council needs to adopt a much more systematic approach to identifying and equipping scrutiny members with the skills they need to perform their duties effectively.

It is proposed that this is undertaken by identifying the core function which all DSP members need, and providing opportunities for the members of DSPs to receive this training at the Council’s offices. In the same manner that was used for quasi-judicial functions, it is proposed that as from the 1st April 2006 the Council constitution be amended to de-bar any member who has not received the requisite training. In order to induct new members, new Councillors would be exempted for a period of one year following their election.

I appreciate that long-standing members may find these requirements to be inconvenient. However the development sessions will be designed to be participatory and as such they will depend upon the contribution of these more experienced members. It will also provide an opportunity for these members to “un-learn” any assumptions, or indeed behaviours, which are not conducive to the development of the Council.

It is intended to consult the DSP chairs on the core functions. Training will predominately be delivered by senior Council staff using outside expertise where appropriate. Each training session will be offered on at least three occasions so that members have a choice over attendance times.

The following core competencies are proposed on the basis that they meet the knowledge criteria already identified:

- Local Government Finance.
- SKDC Corporate Planning and Strategic Partnerships.
- Consultation, Communications and Equalities.
- Call-in, ethics and the Constitution.
- Investigating Performance.
- Procurement and Risk Management.

Each session will aim to cover at least two topics so that the maximum number of sessions individual members will need to attend is three.

To help members plan their commitments around this important area of work it is proposed to schedule these development sessions within the Council's corporate schedule of meetings for 2005/6

Although the content of this training has been selected specifically to meet the needs of members of Development and Scrutiny Panels it would be appropriate if all Cabinet members ensured that they attended the sessions. The training events would also be open to, but not a requirement for, members of the Development Control and Licensing Committees.

The Council has recently been assessing the training and development needs of its senior managers. This process has resulted in a very similar list of key knowledge based training requirements, which are essential pre-requisite of good performance. We therefore have the opportunity to provide a conducive environment within which both senior managers and members can learn, and develop, together. This also ensures a cost effective approach to the acquisition of knowledge.

It would be a sign of commitment if the members of the Cabinet also attended and contributed to these training events. The views of the DSP Chairs and Vice-Chairs on the proposals in this report are being considered at a meeting of the DSP Scrutiny Committee on Monday the 14th February.

Recommendation

That the proposed introduction of a members training and development programme as set-out in this report be approved and that the Constitution and Accounts Committee be asked to consider a change to the Council's constitution that would ensure that all members nominated to serve on the DSPs have been given the knowledge necessary to effectively fulfil these duties.

Duncan Kerr
Chief Executive

Appendix A

Member Training – requirements from Audit Year 2 of Quadrennium

Knowledge	Provision
Who to contact for what	Phone book
SKDC vision	Duncan's leaflets
Community leadership – role & responsibilities	Workshop Via EMRLGA
Portfolio remits	Updates / use of intranet
Interpersonal skills	
Speed reading	Q1 2005
Public Speaking / Making presentations	Q1/ 2 2005
Dealing with aggression and violence	Q4 2005
Persuading / negotiation skills to achieve results	Q4 2005
Research Skills	Q2 2005
Understanding statistics / numerical information	Q2 2005