

Subject: MEMBER DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGY 2006/07

Status: FOR PUBLICATION

Report to: CABINET

Date: 5TH JULY 2006

Report of: HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Portfolio

Holder: HUMAN RESOURCES AND MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

Key Decision:

NO

Forward Plan
Relevant Box

General Exception

Special Urgency

"X" In

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider recommending the Council to approve the Member Development Strategy 2006/07 and associated Action Plan.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 2.1 The matters discussed in this report are linked to and support the following corporate priorities:-

Embedding the Customer Promise:- Empowering elected Members to acquire and develop the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively undertake their role as a councillor is fundamental to ensuring that the Council is able to deliver quality services to the public.

Implementing the Member Development Strategy:- The approval of an annual strategy based upon an evaluation of learning needs, is central to enabling priorities for development to be determined, a programme of training to be delivered and outcomes to be monitored.

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:

- Failure to implement a Member Development Strategy for 2006/07 will undermine the good work undertaken so far, to build the capacity of

elected members and may reduce the effectiveness of the Council's political governance arrangements.

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 4.1 Members will recall that in November 2005 the Council considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, which set out the background to Member development issues in Rossendale and which included Rossendale's first version of a Member Development Strategy, based upon identified needs and priorities for development.
- 4.2 Improvements to Member development had been required in the light of the 2002 the Audit Commission's Corporate Governance report, which identified weaknesses in the Council's corporate governance arrangements and highlighted that the Council did not provide adequate development opportunities for elected Members. In addition the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) carried out by the Audit Commission in 2003, whilst acknowledging some improvements, also highlighted on-going concerns. In response to that report, in 2003 the Council introduced a Member Induction Programme and a Member Training Programme delivered jointly by both in-house providers and the Improvement and Development Agency (I&DeA).
- 4.3 The Audit Commission's Progress Assessment Report of December 2004 noted the improvements which had been made with regard to councillors' involvement in difficult decision making, member development and performance management. However, there was an acknowledgment that this was not fully embedded or yet having an impact on delivery or outcomes. Accordingly, in January 2005, the Council adopted Member Development and New Political Arrangements as its second corporate priority for 2005/06.
- 4.4 The I&DeA published its report in March 2005 following a review of Member Development and Political Arrangements. The report considered the progress made so far and the proposed priorities for the future which helped to shape the content of the Member Development Strategy for 2005/06.
- 4.5 Although that Strategy has only been in place since November 2005, many of the issues contained within it have now been completed or have advanced significantly. In addition, a number of issues have come to light as a result of feedback following Rossendale's participation in a pilot of the Community Leadership Fitness Check undertaken by the I&DeA. The CPA Progress Assessment Report of February 2006 has also identified a number of area for further improvement. Accordingly, it is proposed to update the Strategy and relaunch it for 2006/07.
- 4.6 The purpose of the Member Development Strategy is to provide a clear guidance and direction for the development and support of elected members over the forthcoming year. It will ensure that member development is central to the day to day working of the Council and underpins the move towards Rossendale Council as a learning organisation. The Strategy will provide Members with the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver the Council's

corporate improvement priorities for the benefit of local constituents. A copy of the proposed Strategy for 2006/07 is attached at Appendix A.

- 4.7 The six key objectives of the Strategy, which have been identified in the light of the evidence contained in the above reports, are as follows:-
 - 4.7.1 The provision of a comprehensive Member Development Strategy, Annual Training Schedule and Quarterly Member Development Programme which balances group and individual needs with Council priorities;
 - 4.7.2 Ensuring that all newly elected Members are properly inducted into the Council and their role;
 - 4.7.3 Ensuring that all Members are able to maximize their use of the Council's ICT system;
 - 4.7.4 Undertaking annual review of Member development needs and maintaining personal development plans based upon individual need and preferred learning style to assist them in their development;
 - 4.7.5 Improving the external recognition of Rossendale Borough Council as a lead authority for Member development;
 - 4.7.6 Empowering members to undertake effectively their community leadership role.
- 4.8 The Strategy contains an Action Plan, which outlines how each of the above priorities will be met. The Strategy also forms the basis of an Annual Training Schedule to be delivered in-house, comprising key development sessions for all Members. In addition, there is a Member Development Programme issued quarterly, which identifies a large range of courses, activities and materials, which Members will be able to access to ensure self-development.
- 4.9 The Member Development Working Group (MDWG) continues to oversee the production of the Strategy, Annual Training Schedule and Quarterly Development Programme and to monitor their effectiveness. The Working Group helps to ensure that the views of elected Members remain central to the process. The MDWG has been consulted about the proposal to update the existing Strategy.
- 4.10 Members will be please to note that the 2005/06 Strategy has led to some important successes within Member Development over the last year. The Council has recently received a commendation for its entry in the Municipal Journal Achievement Awards 2006, in the category of Member Development. The Council has also received very positive feedback in connection with a presentation delivered by the Portfolio Holder for Human Resources and Member Development and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services at a Local Government Association seminar held in Leeds in March 2006 on the National Councillor Mentoring Programme. Democratic Services Officers have also commenced working towards accreditation through the North West Charter for Member Development organised by the North West Employers Organisation.

4.11. The Cabinet is invited to consider the report. Any recommendations will be submitted to the Council on 26th July 2006.

4.12. OPTIONS

Not to adopt the Strategy:- Failure to adopt a Strategy will undermine the good work undertaken so far, to build the capacity of elected members and may reduce the effectiveness of the Council's political governance arrangements.

5. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

5.1 Funding for the Member Development Strategy has been earmarked within the Council's training budget for 2006/07.

6. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

6.1 A clear Member Development Strategy will provide Rossendale Borough Council Members with the necessary skills and knowledge to be effective community leaders and to deliver the Corporate Improvement Plan . The Council places importance on effective political and ethical governance.

7. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES

7.1 The Member Development Strategy is a key element of the Organisational Development Plan, and a driver in developing Rossendale into a learning organisation which will deliver quality services which meet the needs of local people.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 Adoption of the Strategy will provide Members with an opportunity to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver the Council's corporate improvement priorities for the benefit of local constituents.

9. RECOMMENDATION(S)

9.1 To recommend the Council to adopt the Member Development Strategy for 2006/07 and associated Action Plan 2006/07.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

10.1 Individual interviews with elected Members were carried out as part of the Personal Development Planning process undertaken in July/August 2005. An analysis of the training needs was provided by the I&DeA in September 2005.

10.2 The MDWG considered the proposal to refresh the 2005/06 Strategy at its meeting on 13th June 2006.

Contact Officer	
Name	Julian Joinson
Position	Democratic Services Manager
Service / Team	Legal and Democratic Services
Telephone	01706 252422
Email address	julianjoinson@rossendalebc.gov.uk

Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Building the capacity of elected members – personal development planning and training needs analysis (Report of the I&DeA - September 2005)	Futures Park