Borough of
Rossendale

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2005/06

CONTENTS

1. Why have a Member Development Strategy? What is it all about?

In 2002 the Audit Commission produced its Corporate Governance report on the Council. The Audit Commission concluded that the Council was one of the worst run Council's in the country. It found that there were weaknesses in the Council's governance arrangements and that the Council did not provide adequate development and training opportunities for members. The following quotes illustrate this:-

"The Council's problems are a result of poor political leadership and the failure of senior management to tackle the problems over a number of years".

"The political leadership needs to understand and respect the respective roles performed by officers and work with them to find solutions to the identified problems faced by Rossendale Borough Council".

"There is little recognition of the need for Councillor development and training".

"Councillors have commented about not having sufficient knowledge or skills to take properly informed decisions. A significant proportion of Councillors are not actively engaged in the decision making process".

"Members should be given basic induction training on procedure and roles in Council meetings. The training should explain clearly the difference in officer and member roles as well as the role of backbenchers and the scrutiny function. They should attend an induction session on the work of a Committee prior its first meeting after an election. That session should cover; which officer is responsible for what (i.e. who to contact), the key services, the legislation affecting them, the successes and problems, the risk the Council is exposed to, what it costs, the savings/changes that have been looked at. Ideally there should also be a tour to the key sites (e.g. leisure services, problem housing estates, highways and refuse vehicle yards, finance etc) and this should include an opportunity to speak to some service users. Members should also receive specific training on the Council's budget process. This training may be best provided by an external agency."

The Council accepted the Audit Commission's findings and implemented an Improvement Plan which is monitored by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

In 2003 the Audit Commission carried out a comprehensive performance assessment on the Council's. The Audit Commission's subsequent report stated:-

"There has been limited development of the role of Members in the recent past and there remains no overall framework within which Member development needs can be identified and met. The knowledge and information with which Members are currently working are insufficient to meet the needs of the Council as a whole. There is limited

knowledge sharing or appropriate and timely briefings on key issues, for example housing stock options. Members' confidence in their knowledge and understanding of these issues will be vital when decisions need to be taken. Scrutiny is in its early stages of development and is beginning to consider the policy development role of Members, through working parties initially scrutinising key issues arising from the CTI report."

"The involvement of Members in management of performance is also patchy. There is no history of Members scrutinising and challenging performance, and the lack of data and systems of accountability for performance has exacerbated this situation. Member confidence in performing their role in the scrutiny of the performance is low."

In 2003 the council introduced its first ever member induction programme and member training programme.

The Audit Commission's progress assessment report dated December 2004 states:-

"The introduction of the Pilot Executive Committee and Member Development Programme with IDeA have improved decision making.

"Members, especially Committee chairman and opposition spokespersons should be encouraged to attend professional conferences and should be made aware of all other development opportunities and the local government media."

The Council has now moved to a position where member development is routinely provided as part of the normal business of the Council. Members now value member development and see it as an important part of their commitment to continuously improve the way they carry out their roles and responsibilities.

Member development is the Council's second corporate priority this year.

The Improvement and Development Agency in its review of member development concluded that the Council's priorities for 2005-06 should be as follows:-

1. Formalisation of the new political and governance arrangements
2. Development of front line members
3. Community leadership
4. Member Officer relations

Having a member development strategy in place will mean that there is clear guidance and direction for the development and support of members over the forthcoming year and it will ensure that member development continues to be embedded as a key element of the Council.

The Strategy will be developed out of the training and development needs that are identified annually by members from their personal development plans to assist them in the delivery of the Council's corporate improvement priorities.

It sets out:

- What areas members have identified as the main priorities to be addressed
- How these are being met and what support is available
- What benefit this will bring to Members, the Council overall and the residents of Rossendale

The Strategy is reviewed annually so that any priorities identified are based on relevant and current needs.

2. Who has been involved in the development of this Strategy?

The Member Development Working Group is developing the Strategy. The Working Group is also responsible for monitoring the Strategy's implementation.

The Member Development Working Group

Cllr Janet Graham   Cllr Judith Driver   Cllr David Hancock   Cllr Gladys Sandiford   Cllr Catherine Pilling

3. What are the ideas behind the Member Development Strategy?

The guiding direction (the vision) behind the Strategy is set out below.

> **To ensure that all members are fully supported in their learning and development so that they have the necessary skills to deliver the council's priorities for the benefit of their constituents.**

This vision will be achieved by 5 key objectives:

1. The provision of a comprehensive Member Development Strategy and Development Programme which balances group and individual needs with Council priorities.

2. Ensuring that all newly elected members are properly inducted into the Council and their role.

3. Ensuring that all members are connected to the council's IT system.

4. Undertaking annual personal development plans for members based on

individual need and preferred learning style to assist them in their development.

5.   Improving the external recognition of Rossendale Borough Council as a lead authority for member development.

The Member Development Action Plan sets out how these objectives will be achieved, along with the main priorities for member development for this year.

4.   What has been achieved so far?

Some of the recent successes in relation member support and development include the following:

♦   The creation of a Member Support Officer post within Democratic Services

♦   The publication of a Members Bulletin

♦   Provision of Laptops to all Members

♦   A comprehensive induction programme for new and returning members to provide specialised support for the first few months in office

♦   Individual training records for every member

♦   An annual training programme

♦   Personal development plans for members (31 Members have participated)

♦   Signed up to the North West Charter for member development

♦   Participation in the East Lancashire Leadership programme

5.   How do we measure our successes?

The Member Development Working Group has the responsibility for reviewing and monitoring support and development for Councillors. It will review the Strategy and Development Programme every 12 months, and reports are regularly taken to the Standards Committee throughout the year on a number of issues.

6.   What are the main priorities for the forthcoming year? How have these been identified?

As a result of consultation with all Council Members via the group representatives on the Member Development Working Group, a list of main priorities for member support and development for the forthcoming year has been identified. The priorities are set in

the Action Plan in Section 9 of this Strategy and will form the basis for the Member Development Programme (see Section 8 for further details).

7. What about my own priorities for support and learning?

Each member has the opportunity to discuss his/her own individual support and learning requirements and develop their own personal plan to address these. These discussions are very informal and can take place either on an individual basis, or say, with a fellow Councillor who may have similar requirements that they too would like to discuss.

The Democratic Services Team will provide the necessary support for this to take place and can help to identify what ways this can best suit individuals as well as the full range of available resources and events.

All discussions will take place on a friendly and informal basis and, of course, are strictly confidential.

If you would like to discuss any individual support or requirements please contact Susan Pickup in the Democratic Services Team on 01706 244598.

8. What resources have we got available?

There are a number of resources that help deliver support for member learning and development:

The Member Development Programme

This document contains details of the wide range of facilities available to meet the main priorities identified including:

♦ workshops	♦ information briefings
♦ one-to-one training	♦ e-learning packages
♦ conferences	♦ visits to other authorities and organisations
♦ books, videos and DVDs	♦ mentoring and shadowing colleagues or officers

The Programme is issued each quarter and includes new events as they arise plus a review of those which have taken place. Copies of this document are available to all members on the Council's Intranet and will be sent to every member via the members' bulletin.

Officer support

Whilst Susan Pickup, Member Support Assistant is your first port of call, all members of the Democratic Services team are happy to help you with any queries or development needs that you have. The Democratic Services Team are:

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Vivista provide support for the Members ICT at Home Scheme and Human Resources assist in the provision of training for members, as appropriate.

Financial support and equipment

A budget of £17,500 has been allocated for member development this year. Responsibility for the budget rests with Human Resources who review the expenditure each quarter.

Each member has a Council laptop and is connected to the Council's IT system.

9. Member Development Action Plan 2005/06

This Action Plan sets out how the objectives and priorities for the current year will be addressed and how success will be measured.

The actions listed have been informed by a number of sources including:

- Consultation with all three political groups on priorities for the year
- Objectives outlined earlier in this Strategy
- Continuation of actions from last years training Programme
- Actions set out in the Council's Corporate Plan
- The Audit Commission Report on Democratic Renewal
- Common themes emerging from members' personal plans

The Action Plan itself will be a 'living document' in that it will be updated regularly by the Member Development Working Group as priorities change and progress is made towards achieving any actions listed.

ACTION PLAN

Note:

MDWG = Member Development Working Group

General Priorities:

Objective/Priority	Key Activities	Budget considerations	Timescale	Critical Success Factors	Key people involved
Provision of a comprehensive Member Development Strategy and Development Programme which balances group and individual needs with Council priorities.	• MDWG to consider initial draft Strategy following consultation with all members	• Nil	August 2005	• Provision of minimum of 5 days training per member per annum • 25% increase in attendance at training events compared to previous year • Increased knowledge, skills and experience gained by Council members	• MDWG • Democratic Services Team • Human Resources (as appropriate)
	• Report to Cabinet and Council	• Nil	November 2005		
	• Strategy to be published and made available to all Members	• Printing costs for copies or nil if email/website	December 2005		
	• Draft Development Programme to MDWG based on Strategy priorities	• £17,500 training budget to address this	December 2005		
	• Quarterly review of development events to MDWG	• Nil	November 2005, February 2006 and May 2006		
	• Quarterly budget monitoring report to MDWG	• Nil	November 2005, February 2006 and May 2006		

Objective/Priority	Key Activities	Budget considerations	Timescale	Critical Success Factors	Key people involved
All newly elected Members to be properly inducted into the Council and their role	• Any by-election		On-going	• Members feel comfortable in their role as councillor more quickly • Rossendale's programme being recognised as example of good practice • Encourage more candidates to stand for office	• MDWG • Democratic Services Team
	• Local election 2006		May 2006		
	• Ongoing review of induction programme and mentoring scheme with MDWG	• Nil	May 2006		
All Members to have the opportunity to benefit from information technology to assist them in their role and their development	• Review provision of documents sent to Members by hard copy	• Probably printing savings	October 2005 and May 2006	• Members becoming e-champions and more accessible to constituents • Faster access to documents • Possible cost savings	• MDWG • Democratic Services Team • Vivista
	• Development of electronic members' enquiry database	• System to be developed in house	February 2006	• Out of hours facility for logging queries • Meet targets for response times to members' enquiries • Increased public satisfaction with members	
	• Roll out of lap top facilities to all Council members	• Possible training costs to be met from Member training budget	August 2006	• Members to have access to IT at home • Members to develop skills to utilise IT effectively	
	• Quarterly review of Members' Information Portal (accessibility, links etc)	• Nil	November 2005, February 2006 and May 2006	• Improved access to key documents • More timely information on ward/corporate issues	

Objective/Priority	Key Activities	Budget considerations	Timescale	Critical Success Factors	Key people involved
Personal plan for members to assist them in their training and development based on individual need and preferred learning style	• Appointments to be scheduled throughout the year	• Some individual development costs	July/August 2005	• 75% of Members to have developed own Personal Plan	• MDWG • Democratic Services Team
	• Review of uptake with MDWG	• Nil	November 2005		
Rossendale being recognised as a lead authority for member development	• Report to MDWG on progress on NW Charter • Re-assessment visits from North West Employers	• Nil • Nil	May 2006 On-going	• Award of Member Development Charter • Shortlisting for LGIU Local Democracy Initiative of the Year • External recognition as Rossendale as lead authority • Constituents' confidence in local councillor	• MDWG • Democratic Services Team
	• Application for LGIU Local Democracy Initiative of the Year Award	• Nil	May 2006		
Review of Member/Officer Protocol	• Report to MDWG	• Nil	March 2006	• Improved working relations between members and officers • Meet targets for response times to members' enquiries	• MDWG • Democratic Services Team

Specific learning/development priorities:

(Please see the Member Development Programme 2005/06 for details of forthcoming specific events/resources available to address these priorities).

Objective/Priority	Key Areas	
Communication skills	• Public speaking/presentation skills	• Customer (constituents) service skills
	• Negotiating/influencing skills	• Report writing
	• Assertiveness skills	
Surgery and related skills	• Running effective surgeries	• Handling conflict and aggression
	• Questioning/counselling skills	• Campaigning skills
	• Handling difficult people	
Media Relations	• Understanding of the media	• Giving media interviews
	• Giving press releases and statements	
General meeting skills	• Chairing meetings	• Making contributions in meetings
Scrutiny	• Chairing scrutiny meetings	• Questioning skills
	• Scoping scrutiny reviews	
Other Council meetings and related skills	• Planning issues	• Employment and Appeals
	• Licensing reforms	• Laws of natural justice
	• Code of Conduct for Members and declaring interests	• The Council's Constitution
Managing yourself	• Time management/prioritisation skills	• Setting up filing systems
	• Speed reading skills	
Information Technology (IT)	• Using word processing packages	• File management
	• Using the Internet	• Members' Portal
	• Using e-mail	• Developing your own website/pages
Budgets and finance	• Understanding the budget process	• Housing finance
	• Capital spending	
	• Education finance	
Performance Management	• The Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) process	• Other inspection regimes.
General issues and knowledge	• Equality and disability	• Information about Council departments
	• Community safety/crime and disorder	• The Council's Masterplan
	• Environmental issues	• Information on outside bodies
	• Risk management and health and safety	