

Ribble Valley Borough Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Final Report on a Scoping Document Review 31st January 2012 on:

Councillor Training and Development.

The issue of Councillors Training and Development has been raised several times over the past few years and for various reasons, has not been implemented within a cohesive system between Councillors and Personnel Section.

It is clear that for a system to work there has to be commitment from all parties where Councillors take responsibility for their own training and development and ensure that they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to be as effective as they can in their job. It is important that information about training and development is notified to Personnel Section to be recorded so that progress and development can be monitored by Councillors themselves or by the Council Leader. No monitoring system is effective without evaluation of training and it is important that Councillors report back about the quality and usefulness of training.

There has to be a commitment also from Personnel Section within the Council to notify Councillors of any opportunities for training and development, and to record and review training records on a regular basis with Overview and Scrutiny as the Committee overseeing Councillor Training and Development. Personnel Section would also be responsible for arranging and delivering in-house training and development along with Council members.

The need to facilitate a cohesive system for Councillor Training and Development that is monitored and reviewed periodically requires a Councillor Training and Development Working Group.

The objectives of this working group are to find out what training and development Councillors have undertaken and ascertain the types of training available to Councillors and identify providers.

The desired outcomes of this review are:

- To highlight the benefits of updating knowledge and skills.
- To secure commitment from Councillors and Personnel Section to work together to improve and monitor knowledge and skills within the Council.
- To ensure that training and development opportunities are regularly notified to Councillors.
- To facilitate an effective system for Councillor training and development that works flexibly around Councillor working patterns and other commitments but also presents a better informed, professional Council.
- To be able to use the wealth of knowledge and skills that experienced Councillors have in order to set up a Mentoring system for new Councillors. (with particular note to Protocol training).
- To prepare a training and development draft form for Councillors record of their own training and development.
- To prepare a spread sheet of all training and development completed since 2008 so that the Leader can review knowledge and skills and make recommendations accordingly.
- To ensure that training is relevant to the job or particular committee.
- To be able to review courses for quality control.

- To recommend to Personnel Section a regular review of Induction Training in order to update information.

It is clear from talking to Councillors, that the right kind of Training definitely helps us do our job and it is important that at this time, when budgets are being cut, that we use the experience within the Council to train newer Councillors in their respective roles .We do also have access to details of free training that comes, via Personnel Section, from the North West Employers Association and from other Councils offering free places on internal courses that they are running. Some Providers offer reduced rates; sometimes for group bookings and it may be advantageous to go as a group if possible.

It is clear that we need to keep the administration of Councillor Training and Development simple, we would encourage Councillors to take responsibility for their own Training and Development as their needs may differ from the needs of others.

Since our last update much progress has been made towards achieving the aims and objectives of the Scoping Document on Training and Development for Councillors. The following action has now been completed:

- E-mail or letter sent to each Councillor asking if they have any particular training needs and from the replies it is clear that IT and Planning are priority training needs, both of which can be arranged in-house. Other individual requests for training have been received and these will be addressed once recommendations have been submitted to Personnel Committee.
- Confirmation that all training and development opportunities are relayed to all Councillors.

- A list of key competencies for Councillors has been collated and will be circulated to all Councillors (see attached).
- A spreadsheet has been prepared listing all Councillors and Training courses each individual has attended since 2008. This information was collected by reference to Personnel Section and individual Councillors. This has been referred to Councillor Ranson, Council Leader for his perusal and recommendations.
- A Training Record Sheet has been prepared for all Councillors to document any training completed (see attached copy of sheet). The information must be notified to Personnel Section as they need to keep Councillor Training and Development records up to date so that training needs can be assessed. There is room for course feedback and this can be notified to Personnel Section at the same time as the notification of completed training.
- Commitment of Personnel Section to Councillor Training and Development has been sought and confirmed.
- Commitment to regular review of Induction training agreed with Personnel Section

Recommendations to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- That Committee appoint a champion for Training and Development to liaise with Personnel Section and Councillor Ranson, Council Leader.

- That Committee refers this scoping exercise to the Personnel Committee scheduled for March 2012 for recommendation of the acceptance of a cohesive Councillor Training and Development as described in these scoping documents. It is expected that the system would operate as follows:
- Personnel Section and Councillors work together to ensure that they are committed to training and development to improve Councillor knowledge and skills.
- Personnel Section will notify all Councillors of relevant training and development opportunities.
- Councillors will take responsibility for their own training and development in that they will ensure that knowledge and skills are updated in order to stay effective in their respective roles.
- Courses will be booked by Personnel Section.
- Councillors will notify Personnel Section about training completed and feedback relevant comments.
- Training records will be updated by Personnel Section and feedback filtered back to Councillor training and development champion for discussion and review of provision.
- New Councillors will have an experienced Councillor as a Mentor. (there should be opportunities at some stage for mentor training).Mentoring should cover the practicalities of Council protocol.
- All Councillors have a list of competencies for reference
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Personnel Committee reviews the system in six months time.

Long Term Objectives:

Council have already accepted a system of Councillor training and development in principle, it is only necessary for Personnel Committee to accept the recommendations as described above. Long term the working group would recommend:

1. That the Council work towards The North West Charter on Elected Member Development. We are, in fact the only Borough in the North West Region that do not have the award and it would enhance the Council status
2. That we work towards Training and Development plans for Councillors.

Sue Bibby

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

18th January 2012