

REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 11 SEPTEMBER 2000
REPORT ON: COUNCILLOR DEVELOPMENT PLAN
REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE PLANNING
REPORT NO: 592-2000

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To report on the analysis of a 'development needs questionnaire' issued to members, and to recommend a Councillor Development Plan in line with the Council's previous adoption of the Councillors' Development Charter.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- i) a Councillor Development Plan for 2000/2001 is agreed, as set out in para 6.3 of this report
- ii) the Director of Corporate Planning is remitted, in consultation with each of the political groups, to evaluate the implementation of the Plan and bring forward annual updates

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The programme of internal briefings/seminars proposed in para 6.3 would be arranged within existing budgets. Similarly, members could be allocated places on the one day courses provided by the Information Technology department without any additional budget implications
- 3.2 A separate report will be brought forward on the financial implications of any member wishing to pursue an interest in the COSLA Professional Development Award.
- 3.3 The financial implications of members' attendance at external seminars and conferences will continue to be reported to Committee as at present.

4. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

The availability of opportunities for training and development is regarded as one of the ways in which Council membership can be made accessible and attractive to a wide range of people.

5. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

None

6. BACKGROUND

6.1 At its meeting on 27 March 2000, Committee agreed a report on Councillors' Development and Councillors' Safety. The report recommended adoption of the Councillors' Development Charter and agreement on a number of actions required to put the principles of the Charter into effect, including the distribution of a 'development needs questionnaire' to all members and the designation of the Director of Corporate Planning as the officer responsible for co-ordinating the production, evaluation and updating of a Councillor Development Plan.

6.2 The key points emerging from the development needs survey can be summarised as follows:

- interest was expressed in a wide range of topics, with the highest scores being given to:
 - information technology (ticked by 73% of respondents)
 - McIntosh report and the Modernising Agenda (64%)
 - finance and budgeting (64%)
 - dealing with the media (64%)
 - best value/performance management (64%)
 - social inclusion/community regeneration (55%)
- the most popular time for training would be a 2-hour session during office hours (ticked by all respondents). Only a small number would find evenings or weekends convenient.
- all respondents would attend training with officers and most (82%) with members of other political groups
- most respondents (73%) would use 'open learning' methods such as books, videos and CD-Roms, as well as 'face-to-face' training
- 7 members expressed an interest in participating in the Professional Development Award programme developed by COSLA

6.3 On the basis of these findings, it is proposed that the Councillor Development Plan for 2000/2001 be agreed as follows:

- a short programme of in-house briefings/seminars should be arranged for 2-hour sessions on Friday afternoons over Autumn and Winter. These will cover the topics highlighted as priorities in the survey, and be introduced by appropriate Council officers
- all members should be given the opportunity to attend the one-day courses organised by Information Technology on e-mail and the Internet, on the same basis as officers
- the names of those interested in the Professional Development Award should be passed to COSLA, so that more detailed information can be sent directly to them
- members should continue to have the opportunity to attend external conferences and seminars as appropriate, subject to Committee approval

6.4 The proposals above are intended to begin a process of taking a more structured approach to Councillors' training and development. It is proposed that the Director of Corporate Planning be remitted to evaluate the implementation of the Plan, in consultation with each of the political groups, and to bring forward annual updates.

Director of Corporate Planning Date