

Committee: AUDIT AND REVIEW

Date: 4 May 2007

Report: MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Purpose of the report

1. To report and seek decisions from members on outstanding issues raised at the Audit and Review Committee meeting on 9 February 2007.

Strategic Planning Framework

2. The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework.

Background

3. At its last meeting, the Committee considered a report on a draft training and development programme for members for 2007/08. Whilst the draft programme, as submitted, was adopted, a number of further issues, as recorded in the following extract from the draft minutes, were also raised and a further report requested:

“(e) the principle of a member mentoring scheme be endorsed and further work carried out on how such a scheme would operate;

(f) members be surveyed to gauge their likely support for training events on racial and disability awareness and on the Council for National Parks' report on Prosperity & Protection;

(g) a further report be brought to the next meeting of the Committee to clarify the issues raised by the Standards Committee on its support for Racial and Disability Awareness Training and on members' response to the survey referred to in (f) above.”

Issues for Consideration

Taking in detail the issues raised at the last meeting and set out in (e) and (f) above:

Member Mentoring

4. Mentoring is a process that is still relatively new in local government, although it is becoming more widely used. In its simplest form, mentoring within any authority would be a means whereby a new member would be provided with a contact, either a member colleague or an officer, to help them following their appointment to the Authority, with particular emphasis on the first few months of their appointment.
5. It is not intended that this scheme should be prescriptive or particularly onerous, but be more of a means of providing a first point of contact for new members to assist them to get 'up and running' following their appointment to the Authority.
6. Whilst all officers of the Authority, but particularly the Chief Executive and Secretariat staff, are available to offer support for members, it is suggested that a mentor would be a fellow **member**.
7. A mentor would be someone with a degree of experience on the Authority; someone who is aware of the likely issues that new members face; someone with sufficient experience and knowledge of the organisation and its personnel to be able to guide the new member to the right contact; and someone able to advise on the Authority's protocols and procedures.
8. It may be appropriate for the mentor to be from the same 'Group' of members as the new appointee(s). If so, each Group could either nominate a mentor who would take on the responsibility of making themselves available for any new member(s), or appoint a mentor whenever a new member is appointed, that way the group would be able to consider which of them would be appropriate for the person concerned, and have the time available at that point in time.

Racial and Disability Awareness/"Prosperity and Protection"

9. Attached as **Appendix 1** to this report is a copy of the correspondence to, and the responses received from members with regard to the possibility of the Authority arranging training on:
 - (a) Racial and Disability Awareness (R&DA); and
 - (b) on the Council for National Parks' report - 'Prosperity and Protection'
10. Member responses (though only 11 in total) indicate some support for both topics. Five members indicated that they would attend R&DA training and eight supported some 'Economic Impact' training.
11. One response is very supportive of both events, and makes particular reference to R&DA training and how that topic arose at the Standards Committee meeting last November. To assist members, an extract from the draft minutes of that Committee meeting is attached as **Appendix 2**.

Conclusion

12. Initially, members need to consider the following, as detailed earlier in this report:

(a) Member mentoring – is the proposed approach as set out in paragraphs 5-8 above acceptable or would members wish a more structured process to be established? If acceptable, consideration needs to be given to the options set out in paragraph 8.

(b) Do members wish training to be promoted for either of the two topics referred to in paragraph 9 above? If so, by what means - formal training, lunchtime briefing (the earliest 'slot' being January 2008) or possibly at a Policy Development Forum?

13. If the answer to 12(b) is yes, members then need to decide, particularly in respect of R&DA training, whether or not that training should be compulsory. If it is decided that it should be compulsory, the Authority would probably arrange in-house training itself in a similar way in which compulsory planning training is arranged.
14. If members decide that the training would be beneficial, but that it should be at members' individual discretion, an option for the Authority, rather than to promote a training event that, given that only five out of 26 members indicated support, would be likely to be poorly attended, might be to 'piggy back' onto training events arranged by other authorities such as the County Council(s) and District Councils.

RECOMMENDATION

15. That members consider and agree ways forward on the issues raised in this report on:

- (a) Member Mentoring;
- (b) the possibility of the Authority arranging training on Racial and Disability Awareness and/or on the Council for National Parks' report - 'Prosperity and Protection'; and
- (c) in the event of approving the promotion of training on either of these topics, decide how that training should be arranged.

David Butterworth
Chief Executive

23 April 2007

Background documents:

None

MEMBER 'SURVEY' ON TAKEUP OF TRAINING

We asked Members:

During a recent discussion by the Audit & Review Committee on the proposed Member Development programme for 2007/08 it was suggested, inter alia, that we should consider providing training in relation to two particular areas:

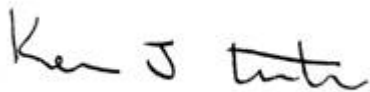
- *Disability/equality, and*
- *CNP's Prosperity & Protection report (into the economic impact of National Parks on the region)*

Before any arrangements are taken forward for further consideration, we need to gauge take-up by members to ensure that numbers are sufficient for sessions to be viable. Any training opportunities offered by this Authority need to be ones that a significant majority of members would be willing and able to attend.

Please could you therefore indicate to Lesley Knevitt in the Secretariat team whether you would attend such sessions if provided? PLEASE BE HONEST It is expensive to provide training and we need to have an accurate indication of likely attendance.

We will report further on member development to the next meeting of Audit & Review Committee, so it would be helpful if we could have your views as soon as possible.

Many thanks for your help.



*Kevin Lancaster
Champion, Corporate & Democratic Core*

MEMBER RESPONSES

Eleven responses have been received, as follows:

1. I would be interested in training on the Economic Impact of National Parks.

2. I would be interested in attending a half day seminar on Economic impact in NPs but I would like it relating to the RES and the Regional Spatial Strategy so that we can see the links and effects of one impacting on the other. The next piece of scrutiny of Yorkshire Forward by the YHA will be based on rural issues so including YF could be timely! Also could be very narrow if only CNPs talk at the Seminar.

And having said all that my diary really gets full very early, April is filling up now and first demands on May are beginning to come in.

3. I would go to the economic impact training but not disability as I have had considerable training previously in this area of activity.

4. I cannot recall who suggested these topics for training, or for what reason. For my part, I would attend if training was arranged, but a) the equality subject does not fill me with enthusiasm. It is a PC matter, and they rarely excite. I would probably agree with everything, but would not be involved in making it happen anyway; and b) I have kept up with the development of the CNP report. I suspect those who need to be persuaded about this matter would not turn up. So: no great enthusiasm, but I will try to take part if sessions are arranged.

5. I must admit I am unlikely to attend either training session unless there was a very strong indication that I needed to.

6. Lesley, I would try to attend whatever is arranged as member training, the only difficulty being that the dates may not be ones on which I was 'free'. I put all the Y.D dates -of our 'regular' meetings on the calendar as I'm sure the others do , but it's when a date is arranged without very much notice that life becomes difficult - and I'm probably one of the people who has the most 'flexible' diary - being a retired person!! Can I suggest that if at all possible, once the subjects of today's email get sorted, that the programme of member training stops being so ad hoc and becomes something which has a programme of dates , just like our other meetings have. This would probably not be able to be implemented until the back end of this year or even next spring but would at least give members prior warning when planning their schedules....Ann

7. Concerning member training - I think it important that Members, and officers, get diversity training, by which I mean raising our awareness of disability and cultural differences in the many audiences that we reach, or should reach.

We are all often totally unaware of the barriers that we put up for people with a range of disabilities - infirmity, impaired hearing or sight, chronic or sporadic illness, mental health, etc; disability doesn't mean just being dependent upon using a wheelchair. Then there are all the cultural differences - different expectations, understandings, confusion in translations or social behaviour allowing for misinterpretations. It's about stepping back and re-viewing all our practices from other perspectives. It is something that I think just about everyone can learn something from (and ironically it is often those who don't think they need such training who are unconsciously putting up barriers and therefore in most need of it...!)

This topic for Member training was raised at the last meeting of the Standards Committee, where there was I recall unanimous support for a recommendation that such training be provided, and it was resolved to recommend to the Corporate Core Member champion that the topic be included in the programme for Member training. I would hope that this recommendation would get wide support - it can benefit all of us in all our public duties and activities.

8. Both are great topics but disability/equality would not be at the top of my list. I would have thought that this is now a given. Every person, not just Authority members, should by now know about discrimination. It's a general topic, not really member-specific. Would I attend? Of course, we all can learn more. A problem for the Authority? I really hope it is not. If anybody feels that it is, by golly we need training soon and I'll change my mind on the first part of what I said.

Second topic: yes, let's start with the report but then widen it. Designated areas are good for business and local people. If member training can help convince people of that, let's have it. And could we look at examples outside England as well?

9. No and no. Disability/equality training oozes from the ears already. The P&P report might form part of a policy forum discussion.

10. I would be interested in both, although I have attended training at Craven on disability/equality. Having said that it was quite a while ago.

11. I think it could be a good idea to have a discussion on disability.

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 30 NOVEMBER 2006
EXTRACT FROM DRAFT MINUTES**

21/06 OTHER BUSINESS

The Monitoring Officer had circulated with the formal agenda papers an extract from the Local Government Chronicle dated 16 November 2006 entitled "Time to shape ethical culture". The article stated that research at Manchester University had identified Standards Committees as being either 'lapdogs, watchdogs or guide dogs'. [Lapdogs being ineffective because they do not have the resources or because of inappropriate political influence; watchdogs being focused closely on member conduct, the operation of the statutory code and making sure members were prepared for conducting adjudication if required; and guide dogs fulfilling the statutory roles, being supportive rather than only regulatory.]

Members suggested that they were a positive watchdog type committee, although it was questioned whether they should be more of a guide dog type. It was noted that the role of the Committee was set by the Authority, and pointed out that Standards Committees elsewhere had been given a wider remit. It was suggested that the Corporate Core Member Champion might have a liaison role with the Committee.

In considering the possibility of the Committee setting the agenda rather than being reactive, the issue of member training was highlighted and, reflecting on an earlier agenda item, the need for training in areas such as racial and disability awareness.

The Secretariat Officer stated that a meeting was shortly to be held between the Chief Executive and Corporate Core Member Champion to discuss how to re-invigorate the member training programme. He added that he would ensure that the issue of such training was raised.

RESOLVED –

That the Committee's view of the need for racial and disability awareness training for members, officers and volunteers be drawn to the attention of the Corporate Core Member Champion.