

# Executive

## Member Development Monitoring Report

1 February 2009

### Report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update members on the progress in member development since the approval of the Member Development and Support Strategy in September 2009.

This report is public

#### Recommendations

---

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To note the improvements since the Member Development and Support Strategy was agreed in September 2009
- (2) To request officers to explore options for external accreditation of Cherwell's Member Development and support arrangements.

#### Executive Summary

---

##### Introduction

- 1.1 The Member Development and Support Strategy was agreed by Executive in September 2009. The Strategy sets out the Council's commitment to member development and support. It explains the responsibilities of the Council in delivering effective support to members. All members have been notified of the strategy which is available on the Council's website. The strategy has raised the profile of member development within the organisation.

##### Proposals

- 1.2 Democratic Services have been conducting support interviews with Councillors. These interviews are important in informing the member development programme. 46% of members have been interviewed to date including 1 independent member of the Standards Committee. 56% of support interviews are expected to be completed by the end of February.

- 1.3 An updated member development programme is published each week in the Members' Weekly Bulletin. It is intended the 2010/11 programme will start with the induction for new members and refresher training for existing members. It is acknowledged that the timing of this training may be affected by the general election.
- 1.4 Member attendance at training events continues to be monitored in accordance with the Corporate Improvement Plan. Since the adoption of the Strategy and the launch of the Members' Weekly Bulletin there has been a positive impact on member attendance at training events. For instance 18 Members attended the IT briefing prior to Council on the 19 October, 13 Members attended the Introduction to Local Government Finance session on 26 October following the Accounts Audit and Risk Committee and 18 members attended the LDF Core Strategy seminar on 4 January 2010. This is a significant improvement on the training events held in the previous year.
- 1.5 The strategy of 'attaching' training sessions to Council meetings has been successful in these cases, and Democratic Services will continue to arrange training sessions in this way, wherever possible. Additionally, training sessions are being repeated where necessary, in order to provide a variety of dates and times to enable a greater number of members to attend. Through using this strategy it is expected that 20 members will be trained in both meeting procedures and chairing skills by March 2010. Regular member attendance information is circulated to group leaders and secretaries at the end of each month to enable them to monitor member attendance by their group members.
- 1.6 Member Development passports have been developed in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Democratic Services and Member Development and have been distributed to members. The Member Development passports will allow Members to keep a record of the events they have attended and assist members in monitoring and recording the events they have attended. The passport also sets out different categories of training and advises on how often training should be completed, for example, essential training once every four years. It is acknowledged that it is both unrealistic and unnecessary for all members to attend all training events.
- 1.7 Members will be aware that issues regarding member training were identified in the CPA inspection in March 2009. Since this time much work has been undertaken in improving and enhancing member development. Whilst performance in this area continues to be monitored as part of the performance management framework, to a large degree this is a subjective assessment. Therefore, there may be merit in the Council obtaining external accreditation of the arrangements that are now in place to ensure that the authority is well placed for future inspections. It is suggested that officers be asked to investigate the costs and benefits this would involve.

## **Conclusion**

- 1.8 The Member Development Strategy has had a positive impact on member development and support informed through the member support interviews process and evidenced by the increased member attendance at development events. It is also believed that this has been assisted through the increased

focus the organisation has given to member development and support, evidenced by the appointment of a specific Portfolio Holder. It is important that if the Council is to build on these achievements, this increased profile in the organisation should be maintained.

### **Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options**

---

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward

<b>Option One</b>	To agree the recommendations
<b>Option Two</b>	Not to agree the recommendations
<b>Option Three</b>	To amend the recommendations

### **Consultations**

---

None

### **Implications**

---

<b>Financial:</b>	Costs of implementing the Member Development and Support Strategy can be met by the current Member Support budget.  Comments checked by Denise Westlake, CSR Service Accountant, 01295 221982
<b>Legal:</b>	Decisions of the Council may be open to challenge if the members taking those decisions have not undertaken the appropriate training.  Comments checked by Liz Howlett, Head of Legal and Democratic Services 01295 221686
<b>Risk Management:</b>	The Council may not achieve the objectives of the Corporate Improvement Plan attendance at member training does not improve  Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management & Insurance Officer, 01295 221566

### **Wards Affected**

---

All

### **Corporate Plan Themes**

---

All

## Executive Portfolio

---

**Councillor Debbie Pickford**  
**Portfolio Holder for Democratic Services and Member Development**

## Document Information

---

<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
Appendix 1	Member Development Action Plan
<b>Background Papers</b>	
Member Development and Support Strategy	
<b>Report Author</b>	Alexa Coates, Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer
<b>Contact Information</b>	01295 221591 alex.coates@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk