

Learning and Development Update

Set out below is a list of the Training and Development undertaken by Councillors since the beginning of the new municipal year. This is regularly reported to the Members Development Steering Group, which received this update on 3 July 2007.

In March all Candidates for the May 2007 election were notified by letter of the Learning and Development Dates for 2007/2008 to give them an early opportunity to make a note in their diaries and the programme of events has been included in each week's publication of the Members Bulletin to give Members advance warning of the sessions.

The following events have been held this municipal year:

Induction for New Members – 9 May 2007

6 Members attended (100% attendance)

The induction programme for new Members covered the following

- Welcome and Introduction to the Chief Executive and the Corporate Board.
- A brief presentation by the Leader on the issues being addressed by the Council.
- The Role of a Councillor.
- Equalities and Diversity – Age Discrimination.
- Ethics and Probity – reference to the new Code of Conduct.
- Health and Safety – corporate responsibility and lone working.
- Regional Spatial Strategy/Regional Assembly/Economic Development and Regeneration.
- The session ended with tea and cakes in the Mayor's Parlour and an opportunity to view and receive a brief presentation on the civic regalia and the Coat of Arms.

Planning Training for Committee Members -originally scheduled for 10 May but postponed to 5 June 2007-

7 Members attended

100% of New Members elected in May 2007 and serving on the Planning Committee attended. Overall 50% of the Planning Committee attended the training.

The evening commenced with a brief explanation of the role of the Development Management group and the composition of the group in the context of their various geographical responsibilities within the Borough. This led to a discussion about the various types of planning application the group deals with and the typical journey of a planning application.

From a more legal perspective, Members were provided with advice on codes of good practice during the planning process and what material considerations could be considered as relevant when assessing a particular planning application. It was explained that the development plan carried a great deal of importance when assessing planning applications and, in particular, the adopted Swindon Borough Local Plan. Finally, there was considerable discussion on the issue of enforcement.

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The consensus from Members appeared to be that the evening was very informative, interesting and worthwhile.

Licensing Committee Training - 14 May 2007

14 Members attended

100% of new Members (elected in May 2007) who are serving on the Licensing Committee attended. Overall, 50% of the Licensing Committee attended the training.

The objective was to prepare Members for their role on the Licensing Committee. The Licensing Act 2003 and the Gambling Act 2005 were compared. The Members also had an opportunity to work through a “pretend” licensing panel. However, Panel Members will be given further intensive training when appropriate.

Annual Scrutiny Conference 22 May 2007

24 Members attended

The Annual Overview and Scrutiny Conference on 22nd May 2007 achieved the following outcomes:

- An insight in to the operation of Select Committees in Westminster and lessons to be learned by local government scrutiny.
- Consideration of suggested issues for inclusion on overview work programmes as a result of consultation with members, officers, external stakeholders and the public.
- Development of draft work programmes for each of the overview committees, based on priorities identified by the consultation prior to the Conference.

Media Training – 24 May 2007

Two Sessions – Beginners – 4 members (plus 2 officers)

– Advanced – 6 members

Each session had a maximum of 6 members per session. The beginner’s session dealt with how a story would look in print, what journalists want and “off the record”. This was followed at the BBC Radio Studios in Old Town with interviewing techniques and an interview with a Radio Presenter.

The second two-hour advanced session simply concentrated on interviewing techniques and was held at the BBC Studios.

The feedback from both sessions was excellent and a request has been received to hold a further session to enhance interview technique skills.

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Anti Smoking in Public Places - 30 May

Two sessions: 12.30 pm **2 Members attended**

6.00 pm **6 Members attended**

Members were given a presentation on the implications of the smokefree legislation which is effective from 1 July 2007. Following that session a leaflet was included in the Members Bulletin highlighting various issues relating to the new legislation.

Health Scrutiny Committee Conference 7 June 2007

9 (out of 10) Members attended

Building on the success of the Annual Overview & Scrutiny Conference, the first Health Scrutiny Conference was held on 7th June 2007:

- Representatives from Swindon Primary Care Trust, Swindon & Marlborough NHS Trust, Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust and Public and Patient Involvement Forum representatives from each of the 3 Trusts also attended.
- The Conference was facilitated by an Associate from the Centre for Public Scrutiny and IDeA Health Scrutiny Support Programme
- Outcomes:
- Members received an introduction to the role of Health Scrutiny, and the current national priorities for the NHS.
- Members and health partners discussed suggestions for inclusion in the work programme for 2007/08 that had resulted from consultation with Members, officers, health partners and the public.
- Members and health partners agreed 6 priorities to be progressed as part of the work programmed for 2007/08.
- The Conference provided a valuable opportunity for Members and health partners to meet, many for the first time and several members are new to the Committee this year.

Ethics and Probity – 13 June 2007

Attended by 11 Members and 2 Lay Members

The Monitoring Officer outlined the implications of the New Code of Conduct that was adopted by the Council on 18 May 2007.

Borough Farms Tour – 18 June

This Tour has been postponed to 18 September 2007 due to insufficient Members being able to attend.

Equalities and Diversity – 19 June 2007

5 members attended the lunch time session

6 members attended the evening session

The session covered, through the use of case studies and questionnaires:

- Institutional practices within an organisation and what can be done to combat this.; and
- the impacts on employees and employers and how legislation in general evolves.

The facilitator found it to be a worthwhile event

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Health Scrutiny Training

Attended by 5 Members

The session introduced members to the basic issues of the local authority's scrutiny of the National Health Service.

Housing Tour – 21 June

Attended by 6 Members (in addition to some tenants and officers)

There was positive feedback from those who joined the tour.