

Maidstone Borough Council
Scrutiny Coordinating Committee

Thursday 28 November 2013

Member Development Needs

Report of: Christian Scade, Senior Corporate Policy Officer

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview and Scrutiny requires a number of skills and the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee, in its report (April, 2013) to Council on the Cabinet and Enhanced Scrutiny Model made the following recommendations:

- "The development needs for scrutiny and an appropriate programme be developed by the Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen and the Scrutiny Team. This could include an annual event with other Councils and use of Parliamentary Outreach support."
- "Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee should identify development needs at the beginning of the year and then on a quarterly basis via the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee"

1.2 This is an opportunity for the Coordinating Committee, in view of experiences this municipal year, to provide feedback on future member development activities and to identify any additional training needs for Overview and Scrutiny.

2. Recommendation

2.1 That the Committee:

- (a) Consider, and provide feedback, on member development activities planned for Overview and Scrutiny in 2013/14 (see par 5.3 and 5.4);
- (b) Identify any additional training needs or development areas for Overview and Scrutiny.

3. Background to recommendations

3.1 Maidstone Borough Council is committed to providing an effective and efficient service to the residents and businesses of and visitors to the Borough. The council recognises the importance of learning and development in supporting all councillors in undertaking their roles in the community and within the council.

3.2 In July 2013, the Member and Employment and Development Panel agreed the revised Member Development Policy, which provides a framework to enable the Council to manage its member development activities for elected members in a coherent and systemic way. This is attached at **Appendix A** for information.

4. Scrutiny Skills

4.1 A number of skills have been identified for Scrutiny Committee Members and these are listed in the Members' Overview and Scrutiny Handbook.

4.2 The list below should be used to identify any training needs or development areas. These can be addressed through formal training, one-to-one sessions or mentoring; many, however will be developed through experience.

Skills for Scrutiny Members

– adapted from the LGiU Scrutiny Checklist, 2003

- Taking evidence from a wide range of people, interviewing, questioning and listening skills
- Understanding and using
 - Performance management information
 - Other data and findings from research
 - Information from inspections
- Understanding of the policy framework, skills to review implications of policy framework
- Developing recommendations, negotiating a report across parties and handling minority reports/vies
- Digesting and understanding paperwork and electronic information
- Communication skills
 - Presentation and public speaking
 - Reporting, possibly report writing
- Influencing Skills
- Monitoring implementation of recommendations
- Evaluation skills

4.3 In addition, the skills below have been identified as necessary for Scrutiny Chairmen:

Skills for Scrutiny Chairmen

– adapted from the LGiU Scrutiny Checklist, 2003

- Leadership and project management skills
- Planning and managing a busy workload
- Ability to identify topics of public interest for review
- Ability to work with officers
- Chairing meetings of different types, from steering a formal agenda to facilitating an informal group to holding a public consultation session
- Champion Scrutiny both internally and externally
- Dealing with the media

5. Member Development Activities

- 5.1 Following the recommendations that were made in relation to the Cabinet and Enhanced Scrutiny Model, listed in par 1.1 above, and the implementation of the revised Member Development Policy, the Policy and Information Team have been working with the Centre for Public Scrutiny and the Parliamentary Outreach Service on two development activities.

Questioning Skills

- 5.2 Representatives from the Parliamentary Outreach Service have agreed to facilitate a Questioning / Challenging skills session on the 29 January, 2014. This will be led by Judith Boyce, currently of the Table Office, and who has previously worked as a clerk on several Select Committees.
- 5.3 In order to finalise arrangements, the Parliamentary Outreach Service have asked for feedback, from the Coordinating Committee, to ensure they deliver a session that meets the aims and objectives of Members.

Making the most of Scrutiny

- 5.4 Ed Hammond, the Research and Information Manager at the Centre for Public Scrutiny, has agreed to facilitate this development activity, on a date to be confirmed. The outline of the session is attached (in draft) at **Appendix B** for comment.
- 5.5 Following this session, the Centre for Public Scrutiny will produce a report with an action plan.

6. Impact on Corporate Objectives

- 6.1 Member Development underpins the work of the council in all the democratic processes and is critical to ensure that Members are properly supported to undertake their role.

7. Other Implications

- 7.1 The council has agreed a budget for Member Development.
- 7.2 In addition to meeting the individual training needs of elected members, the budget will be used to provide across the board training for all councillors on Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- 7.3 There are financial implications of either increased or reduced provision, but the Member Development Policy would operate within existing budgets.
- 7.4 There are staffing implications because the development of scrutiny training activities is provided by officers. An increase in member participation would make better use of their time.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 None.