



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE – 13TH FEBRUARY 2014

SUBJECT: SCRUTINY IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN – MEMBER TRAINING

REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES & SECTION 151 OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Democratic Services Committee of the outcome of the training carried out as required by the Scrutiny Improvement action Plan.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report outlines the training offered, member attendance, evaluation and feedback.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The operation of scrutiny is required by the Local Government Act 2000 and subsequent Assembly legislation.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan was presented to Council on the 8th October 2013. The report recommended certain training for members to improve the critical friend challenge and impact of scrutiny. Council endorsed all of the recommendations contained in the action plan and the following training courses were arranged and provided by LinkUK Ltd:

- Questioning and Listening Skills
- Effective Pre-meetings
- Chairing Skills

- 4.2 A total of 58 Members were offered training in questioning and listening skills and effective pre-meetings. These were the 56 members on scrutiny committees plus the 2 recently elected Members. Co-opted members were also invited but not included in the 58 for the purpose of this report. The 11 Scrutiny Leadership Group Chairs and Vice Chairs were targeted for the chairing skills training as identified in the Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan.

Questioning and Listening Skills

- 4.3 A total of five training sessions were offered with three sessions at 2pm and two at 5pm. The training was aimed at helping Members to identify key issues and develop questioning and listening skills.

In total 33 out of 58 (57%) Members attended the training sessions, appendix 1 lists the attendance for individual members. The following is a breakdown of why members did not attend the training:

- Not available – 7 or 12%
- Apologies – 11 or 19%
- No response – 7 or 12%

Effective Pre-meetings

4.4 A total of four training sessions were offered with two sessions at 2pm and two at 5pm. The training was aimed at helping Members understand the aim of pre-meetings and identify issues of concern.

4.5 In total 28 out of 58 members (48%) attended the training sessions, appendix 1 lists the attendance for individual members. The attendance can be further broken down for each scrutiny committee, as follows:

- Education for Life Scrutiny Committee - 10 members or 62.5%
- Health Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee – 7 members or 43.7%
- Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee – 9 members or 56%
- Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee – 6 members or 37.5%

The following is a breakdown of why members did not attend the training:

- Not available – 9 or 16%
- Apologies – 14 or 24%
- No response – 7 or 12%

Chairing Skills

4.6 There was one training session for this course, which was primarily aimed at Scrutiny Leadership Group Chairs and Vice Chairs. The aim of the training was to help develop chairing skills, identify themes and performance issues in reports and implementing the new format for pre-meetings.

4.7 In total 8 out of 11 (73%) Chairs and Vice Chairs attended the training, plus 4 additional members. Appendix 1 lists the attendance for individual members. The following is a breakdown of why members did not attend the training:

- Not available – 1 or 2%
- Apologies – 2 or 3%
- No response – 0

Feedback and Evaluation

4.8 The feedback received is summarised as follows:

Question	Questioning and Listening Skills Training	Effective Pre-meetings Training	Chairing Skills Training
Overall how useful did you find the sessions?	Very Useful 100%	Very Useful 90% Fairly Useful 10%	Very Useful 89% Fairly Useful 11%
How relevant was the content of the event to you?	Most Relevant 96% Fairly relevant 4%	Most Relevant 87% Fairly relevant 13%	Most Relevant 67% Fairly relevant 33%

Was the content pitched at the right level for you?	Yes 100%	Yes 100%	Yes 100%
How do you rate the delivery style of the facilitator?	Excellent 92% Good 8%	Excellent 97% Good 3%	Excellent 89% Fair 11%
How useful was the learning event for your own learning and development?	Very useful 96% Fairly useful 4%	Very useful 87% Fairly useful 13%	Very useful 78% Fairly useful 22%
How well will you be able to use what you have learned?	Very well 81% Fairly well 19%	Very well 90% Fairly well 10%	Very well 56% Fairly well 44%

4.9 A number of comments were received from participants, listed below are a selection:

- I would now be more confident in meetings with officers
- Mr McGrath gave an excellent presentation. Kept us listening and alert
- Have implanted many thoughts and ideas into my head
- Have learned a lot from this and will certainly feel more confident going into Scrutiny meetings.
- This is a very worthwhile and useful course and I will be able to use these skills

4.10 There were also suggestions for further training from Members:

- Public Speaking
- Evidence-Based Decision Making
- More training to enhance performance of councillor especially in decision making
- How should scrutiny really work
- Understanding the detail of reports
- Development of Chairing Skills
- Questioning Skills
- Presentation skills
- 'Golden Minute' at start of meeting
- Prioritising questions
- Time management
- Financial Training
- Scrutiny

4.11 Overall the feedback received was very positive, Members seemed to enjoy the sessions and thought the trainer was excellent.

Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan

4.12 The Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan set a target of 80% satisfaction for Members attending training, between 89% to 100% of members rated the training overall as very useful

4.13 The Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan set targets for participation, as follows:

Training	Target	Result
Questioning and Listening Skills	Target for Member participation = 90%	57%
Chairing Skills	Target for Member participation = 100%	73%
Effective pre-meetings	Target for training completed = 100%	48%

4.14 There are a number of members who have not yet taken part in the training (see appendix 1) in order to meet the above targets additional training would need to be provided, as follows:

- Questioning and Listening Skills Training – 25 Members outstanding, minimum of 6 required to meet the target.
- Effective Pre-meetings – 30 Members outstanding, all are required to meet the target.
- Chairing Skills – 3 Members outstanding, all are required to meet the target.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This report is for information purposes, so the Council's EqIA process does not need to be applied.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications not contained in the report.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no personnel implications not contained in the report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 This report was presented to the Scrutiny Leadership Group on 17 December 2013 and it was recommended that additional training courses be arranged for Members.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That Democratic Services Committee note the scrutiny training offered and accepted by Members and comment on provision of further training.

10. STATUTORY POWER

10.1 Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000

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Appendices:
Appendix 1 – Member Training Attendance