

Council – 15 July 2010

80% PLANNING TRAINING THRESHOLD

Report presented by the Member Support Services Manager on behalf of the Political Structures Working Group.

Statutory Powers: Local Government Act 2000.

Financial Implications: Potential savings arising from sharing training sessions with West Devon Borough Council.

Purpose:

To outline the recommendations of the Political Structures Working Group regarding the current requirement in the Council Constitution to attend 80% of planning training events held.

RECOMMENDATION

That, with immediate effect after the Council meeting on 15 July 2010, the Constitution be amended to reflect that:-

- **Two Planning Training sessions be convened annually, with an expectation that all Members have to attend both of these in order to be able to take part in the planning decision-making process during the following Municipal Year;**
- **Newly elected Members will have to attend two induction Planning Training sessions before they can take part in the planning decision-making process during that year and must also attend both annual sessions.**
- **Repeat sessions will be held in conjunction with West Devon Borough Council to provide additional opportunities for Members to meet the requirement to attend both the induction training and the two sessions;**
- **Whilst re-elected Members will be welcome to attend the two induction sessions, this will be optional and will not count towards the requirement to attend the two annual sessions.**

Background

1. Part 4 sub section 3.1 of the Council Constitution currently states that any Member wishing to participate in decisions taken in relation to the Development Management process must achieve a minimum threshold of 80% attendance at planning training events.
2. To be able to achieve a threshold of 80%, it has been necessary to organise five different sessions, with a requirement for Members to attend four of these. Including repeat sessions, and to ensure that as many Members as possible were able to meet the threshold, eleven sessions were held in total during the 2009/10 Municipal Year.

- In light of concerns raised by some Members at this Constitutional requirement, the matter was considered in detail by the Political Structures Working Group at its meeting on 19 May 2010 and subsequently reported to the Member Development Steering Group at its meeting on 10 June 2010.

Additional Recommendations

- The main recommendations of the Political Structures Working Group are outlined on the previous page. In making these recommendations, the Group has requested that dates for these sessions are issued to Members as far in advance as possible.
- The Group also felt that wherever possible, training sessions should last for no longer than two hours and should be two-way and fully interactive. It was also considered important that for future planning training sessions, a feedback survey be conducted in order to evaluate the effectiveness of each session.

Risk Assessment

Opportunity	Issues / Obstacles	Benefits
To assist Members in becoming even more aware of issues to be borne in mind during the decision-making process for Development Management.	By making it compulsory to attend two sessions, it is essential that dates are convened as far in advance as possible to allow Members every possible opportunity to attend.	To enable Members to be kept fully informed of emerging issues (e.g. potential new legislative requirements).
To provide Members with opportunities to expand upon their existing skills, interests and knowledge.	The Group felt there to be a delicate balance between Members receiving adequate planning training, whilst ensuring that they did not turn into officer mode and simply agree with all case officer recommendations.	By synchronising our planning training with West Devon Borough Council, the costs of convening sessions is reduced.

Conclusion

- The Political Structures Working Group has conducted a full and open review of the issue of planning training. The Group recognises the importance of Members receiving planning training. It is hoped that by introducing these revised measures, the format will be less cumbersome and will be more in line with Member requirements.

Political Structures Working Group

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Background Documents:

Reports to and Minutes of the Political Structures Working Group
Council Constitution