This Councillor Development Annual Report gives a summary of Councillor Development over the past twelve months and maps out plans for the forthcoming year.

Membership for 2011/2012 comprised myself (Chair) and Councillors Nazim Choudary, Roger Conroy, Brendan Glynane, Suresh Patel and Danielle Stone, with the support of various key Officers. The Group met twice and it oversaw, monitored and championed Councillor Development at Northampton Borough Council.

I believe that Councillor Development is fundamental to the effectiveness of a Councillor’s duties and I am pleased to report back on a very successful previous year, with some excellent planning undertaken for work in future years.

With 28 newly elected Councillors in May 2011, I would particularly like to commend the work of the Councillor Induction Programme. The Programme was designed to ensure that all Councillors were provided with relevant information and were trained on a number of required processes prior to the first round of Committee meetings and to provide an easy transition into their new roles. The Councillor Development Group is examining how this important programme can be further developed for after the May 2015 elections. The Group’s key aim for the coming year will be to focus on developing a programme of development that can help Councillors develop their skill base and help them in the duties they undertake.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have facilitated and attended Councillor Development sessions over the past year and to the Members of the Councillor Development Group.

Councillor Mike Hallam
Chair, Councillor Development Group
Councillor Training and Development Needs

Northampton Borough Council identifies and meets the training and development needs of Councillors in a variety of ways:

**Comprehensive Induction Programme.** The Induction Programme included sessions on chairing skills, Local Government Finance, ethical Standard and the Code of Conduct.

**Regulatory Committees** Councillors new to the Planning and Licensing Committees received thorough training prior to attending the inaugural meetings.

**Overview and Scrutiny Training Champion** – Overview and Scrutiny has elected its Training Champion who identifies potential development needs over the year.

**One to One Sessions** - Councillors taking on a new role attend a meeting with Officers so that any development needs can be identified.

**Legislative and other changes** – Various sessions are held as and when required.
Councillors are invited to suggest training that they feel would help them carry out their role.

The Councillor Development Group (CDG) will identify any potential gaps in the Councillor Development Programme and propose future training.

The Leader of the Council also puts forward suggestions of skills that he feels the Councillors may need.

**Councillor Development Sessions**

Councillor Development Sessions are widely advertised through the monthly Councillor E-Newsletter – Councillor Connect, and the Council’s committee meeting management system.

The Councillor Development Programme is wide ranging and includes:

- External Conferences, such as the Local Government Association Conference and the Centre for Public Scrutiny Annual Conference.
- Leadership Academy hosted by the Local Government Group.
- Training for Councillors new to the Regulatory Committees – Planning and Licensing.

Councillors new to the Council received training around an introduction to Overview and Scrutiny and a further session around the skills required to chair an Overview and Scrutiny Committee and a Scrutiny Panel. Visits – Tour of the Borough Council departments.

One to one training, as required.

**Councillor Induction Programme**

29 Councillor Development sessions were delivered from 24th May 2011 to 16th May 2012 and were well attended:

**Key examples:**

Planning Committee
28.9%

Planning Committee ‘mop up session’
13.3%

Introduction to Overview and Scrutiny
26.7%

Licensing Committee
26.7%

Code of Conduct Part 2
33.3%

Neighbourhood Working
57.8%

Performance Management
31.1%

Housing Briefing and Updates
40.0%

Using the Councillor Fund Session 1
26.7%

Using the Councillor Fund Session 2
48.9%

Using the Councillor Fund Session 3
8.9%
Immediately after the election results were announced, each of the successful candidates received a pack of information to help prepare them for their time in office. This included:

- Councillors’ Welcome Pack Booklet
- Councillor Induction Programme and Booking Form
- Councillor Guide 2011-12
- Protocol on Member/Employee Relations
- Model Code of Conduct for Councillors
- Members Register of Interests Form
- Councillor Profile Questionnaire
- Diversity Monitoring Form
- Payroll Information Forms

The following week, the Councillor Induction Programme commenced with a welcome evening for all newly elected and returning Councillors. This was the first time such an event had been organised and was well received by those in attendance. It was an opportunity for Councillors to meet each other and members of the Management Board.

A series of Development Sessions followed which were very well received with high attendance levels.

Feedback

A review of each Councillor Development session is obtained by way of a feedback form. Councillors who attend a development session are given a feedback form to complete. The information on the feedback forms is recorded and used for analysis purposes.

Key examples show the high overall satisfaction level of Councillor Development sessions provided during 2011/2012:

- Planning Committee 100%
- Planning Training Material 84%
- Licensing Committee 100%
- Chairing Skills 100%
- Chairing Skills (Overview and Scrutiny) 100%
- Introduction to Overview and Scrutiny 100%
- Code of Conduct 100%
- Using the Councillor Community Fund 94% - 100%
“Excellent trainer. I have learnt a lot of new things that will help me during Panel working and to do the job well.”

“Questioning techniques useful, will use at Scrutiny meetings”

“Good to see full engagement by Councillors.”

“Fab stuff”

“Very good course”

“The Leadership Academy has certainly been useful in picking up new ideas and refreshing on things that you have long forgotten! It has been good to meet with other councillors from differing political parties from a range of local authorities to share experiences and best practice, particularly since attendance was free of charge.”

“Another very well run induction course by a very knowledgeable facilitator.”

“Informative and educational”

“Great overview”

“Very good, well done on making Council Tax recovery interesting.”

“Interactive session – model of good practice.”

“Interactive session – model of good practice – model of good practice.”

“Very good session, stimulating”
£16,000 was allocated to the Councillor Development Budget for 2011/2012 which covered internal and external courses and conferences. Travel and other associated expenses were coded to a different budget.

Councillor Development sessions for 2011/2012 were not typical in that they were mainly delivered in-house which meant that just 38.21% of the budget was spent. Additionally, just one Councillor attended the Leadership Academy hosted by the Local Government Group. This place was offered free of charge.

The projected spend on the budget for Councillor Development for 2012/2013 is 81.34%, which ensures there is sufficient budget remaining to allow for any requests for additional Councillor Development Sessions and seminars.

**Councillor Connect – Councillor’s E-Newsletter**

Councillor Connect, an e-newsletter for Councillors, is issued electronically each month. The purpose of Councillor Connect is to update Councillors on various key issues however it also has an important role of highlighting Councillor Development Sessions over the following two month period.

**Councillor Zone**

The newly launched Councillor Zone has been designed with quick links to give easy access to a range of pages that Councillors and prospective Councillors will find useful.

A library of presentations given to Councillor Development Sessions is being compiled and access will be through the Councillor Zone. The aim of the library is to ensure that Councillors who were unable to attend a Councillor Development Session will still be able to access the information provided.

**Challenges for 2012/2013**

The key challenges for 2012/2013 include:

- Raise the profile of Councillor Development at Northampton Borough Council
- Ensuring the Councillor Development Programme continues to meet the needs and requirements of Councillors
- Increasing the attendance at Councillor Development Sessions
- Learning from best practice elsewhere
We are always looking at ways we can improve the Councillor Development Programme so we need your feedback!

Please can you spare a few minutes to answer the questions below and forward them to the Councillor Connect Team:

1. Is the timing of Councillor Development Sessions suitable and if not, what times would you suggest for 2012/2013?

2. Which Session over the past year gave you the most benefit and why?

3. Which Session over the past year gave you the least benefit and why?

4. Please suggest a topic for a future Councillor Development Session that you feel would be of use and benefit to all Councillors

Contact details for more information

The Councillor Connect Team is always very happy to speak to you about your suggestions for future Councillor Development Sessions. If you have any comments or queries or would like to suggest future sessions, please contact the Councillor Connection Team.