

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL
Audit Committee
8th April 2011

Report of: Strategic Director: Corporate Services

Report Title: Audit Committee Training Provision

Ward: Citywide

Officer presenting report: Richard Powell, Chief Internal Auditor

Contract Telephone Number: 0117 92 22448

RECOMMENDATION

The Audit Committee note the outcomes of the skills assessment, identify any other needs and agree the provisional training programme.

SUMMARY

This reports details the outcomes of the skills assessment and provides a provisional training programme.

The significant issues in the report are:

- Section 3 - Assessment Outcomes
- Section 5 - Provisional Training Programme

Policy

This report is submitted in accordance with the Audit Committee's Terms of Reference and Internal Audit's Charter and Strategy.

Consultation:

Internal: Councillor Development Programme Lead, Audit Committee Members.

External: None necessary

1. Introduction

1.1 It has long been the aspiration of the Core Cities Audit Chairs Group to formulate a generic training programme initially for Audit Committee Chairs, but also with the view of rolling the training out to other Committee Members. However, a decision was taken at their February 2011 meeting that the responsibilities of each committee were sufficiently diverse to preclude the provision of a meaningful generic training programme for Chairs and Members. Therefore, the decision was taken that whilst a generic programme would not be taken forward, individual Councils' who undertook training would circulate the training material to other Core Cities for their use.

Additionally, as a result of a review of the effectiveness of the Audit Committee by the external auditor, it was recommended that a skills assessment of the Committee Members would be beneficial in order to identify gaps and assist in the formulation of a training programme.

1.2 As a result of these issues, Internal Audit were commissioned to carry out a skills assessment involving the existing Audit Committee Members.

1.3 This report details the methodology utilised to complete the assessment, the outcomes and recommendations for a provisional training programme.

2. Skills Assessment

2.1 The assessment took the form of a questionnaire which was sent out to the 5 serving Councillors and the 2 independent members which make up the Audit Committee.

2.2 The questionnaire was split into three constituent part as follows:

- Core and generic knowledge/skills
- Specific areas where training would be beneficial
- Preferred Learning styles.

2.3 The core and generic knowledge/skills element was designed to identify skills base and or gaps in areas which were considered essential/desirable for Audit Committee members.

2.4 The Specific Areas element provided a list of areas of training which would aide the Committee Member in the execution of their Audit Committee duties, the list was not exhaustive and Members were invited to identify any other areas where training would be beneficial. Additionally, Committee Members were requested to indicate their preferred style of learning, in order to ensure that the maximum amount of benefit could be gained by Members when attending any training provision.

3. Assessment Outcomes

3.1 Core and generic knowledge/skills

This element of the assessment indicated 5 possible areas for further development, they were:

- Understanding the Authority's structure, including relationships
- Understanding the Authority's culture
- Understanding the Local Authority's processes
- Understanding the Authority's procedures and legislation
- Understanding the Internal and External Function

3.2 Specific Skills:

This element indicated 8 possible areas for further development, they were:

- Partnership Working
- Risk Management in partnership working
- Information Security
- Freedom of Information issues
- Treasury Management
- Asset Management
- Project Management
- Fraud

3.3 Learning Styles:

There was no clear learning style which was acceptable to all Committee Members, but a combination of presentations and workshops appeared to be the preferred approach, with the possibility of some online learning for those with limited time.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Core and generic knowledge/skills

For the subjects which centre around the Authority's culture, processes, legislation etc., the Councillor Induction and Refresher programme offers training in these areas. However, to date independent members have not been invited to attend this training. It has now been agreed that independent members may apply to attend the training provided in the programme where they feel it would be beneficial to their membership of the Committee. *Please see appendix A for Draft New Councillor and Refresher Training Programme.*

For the role of Internal and External Audit and how they interact, a short presentation appended onto another training session or a short paper taken as an information item at a Committee meeting should address this requirement.

4.2 Specific skills

There are clearly areas here where a targeted training session would be appropriate, however a number of elements could be added together in order to cut down on the amount of time Committee members would have to give to the training. For example:

- Partnership working and risk management in partnership working could be amalgamated into one session
- Treasury and asset management could also feasibly be merged into one session.

For the other areas single presentations perhaps merged into one training session may be the best way forward as a number of the areas are quite complex, for example:

- Fraud
- Project Management
- Freedom of Information (FOI) although there is an element of FOI training offered in the Councillor induction programme

The Information Security element is already provided through an interactive e-learning package. All Committee Members have been requested to complete the training. Where independent members require this training, alternative arrangements will need to be made.

5. Training Programme

5.1 The table below details the identified training needs of the Audit Committee and the possible source of that training. It is hoped that this programme will provide a training basis for current and future Committee members.

Area	Source	Comments
Understanding the Authority's: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● structure;● culture; and● relationships	Councillor Induction and Refresher Programme	If Members feel the information provided as part of the programme is insufficient, then further training can be provided.
Understanding the Local Authority's processes	Councillor Induction and Refresher Programme	If Members feel the information provided as part of the programme is insufficient, then further training can be provided.

Area	Source	Comments
Understanding the Authority's procedures and legislation	Councillor Induction and Refresher Programme	If Members feel the information provided as part of the programme is insufficient, then further training can be provided.
Understanding the Internal and External Function	Short presentation by IA & GT or short report.	
Partnership Working	Training session provided by IA	
Risk Management in partnership working	Training session provided by IA	
Information Security	On-line e learning package available.	Where independent members require this training, alternative arrangements will need to be made.
Freedom of Information issues	Councillor Induction and Refresher Programme	If Committee members feel this topic is not sufficiently covered in the programme, then further training can be arranged.
Treasury Management	Treasury Management Team	Training previously provided by external contractor in November 2009, but attendance was low.
Asset Management	Corporate Property Management Team	
Project Management	Centre of Excellence for Portfolio Programme Project Management	TBC
Fraud	Internal Audit	Annual Fraud update together more targeted Fraud training as required. Access to the current on-line Fraud e-learning package which has been rolled out to a number of BCC employees.
International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and Statement of Accounts	PR /Grant Thornton	Training proposed joint training in May 2011

Further training on an ad-hoc basis for current topics could be arranged as necessary. e.g:

- Monitoring process for areas such as H&SC issues.

5.2 Training session would be held separately from the scheduled Audit Committee meetings at a time to suit Committee Members commitments.

5.3 The use of Modern Councillor, an online e-learning training provision, was considered however this facility did not prove to be versatile enough to meet the requirements and its use was therefore dismissed.

8. Other Options Considered

8.1 Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA) draft training Programme for Audit Committee Chairs.

8.2 Modern Councillor online e-learning provision.

9. Risk Assessment

9.1 Risk: Committee members are not fully trained and therefore ineffective in their role within the Committee.

Mitigation: Councillor Training Programme, training provided by Internal and External Audit

10. Equalities Impact Assessment

10.1 None necessary for this report

11. Legal and Resource Implications

11.1 Legal - none sought

11.2 Resource implications

There will be a resource requirement for Council Officers to provide the specific training which is outside their normal remit. The training provided through the Councillor Induction Programme is already resourced, therefore there will be no implication for those areas.

Appendices

Appendix A: Draft New Councillor Induction and Refresher Programme for 2011

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACCESS TO INFORMATION



****DRAFT as at 24th February 2011****

NEW COUNCILLOR INDUCTION AND REFRESHER PROGRAMME 2011

DATE & VENUE	TIME	WHO	WHAT
W/c 9th May			
Monday 9th May 2011 The Council House	2.30pm – 6.30pm (approx)	The Lord Mayor of Bristol, Cllr Colin Smith Cllr Barbara Janke, Leader of the Council Jan Ormondroyd, Chief Executive Stephen McNamara, Head of Legal Services Rachel Boast, Councillor Development Officer	Welcome session and swearing in Inc Market Place, ID badges and IT demo **SLT and other relevant offices (inc Group Office Support) in attendance**
The Council House 10th May (TBC)	2 x 2.5 hours	Stephen McNamara, Head of Legal Services Shahzia Daya, Senior Solicitor Peter Holt, Service Director for Communications and Marketing (TBC)	The Council Part 1 – what new councillors need to know <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Governance and decision making (inc role of Cabinet, Full Council, Scrutiny, regulatory committees, neighbourhood partnerships, outside bodies) • Information (Code of Conduct, Freedom of Information and Data Protection) • The Media (TBC)
The Council House 12th May (TBC)	2 x 1 hour	Peter Carey, Assistant Payroll Manager Ian Pagan, Democratic Service Manager	Practical Paperwork and support to members (Group Offices) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payroll and pension • Register of Interests • Members Allowance Scheme • Members Support • CRB (Criminal Records Bureau)

DATE & VENUE	TIME	WHO	WHAT
W/c 16th May			
The Council House 16th May (TBC)	2 x 2 hours	Shana Johnson, Scrutiny Coordinator, Ian Pagan, Democratic Services Managers and Ian Hird, Cabinet Coordinator	An Introduction to Decision Making <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet • Full Council • Scrutiny • Regulatory Committees • Other Committees
17th May 2011 - ANNUAL COUNCIL			
The Council House 19th May (TBC)	2 x 1.5 hours	Ian McDowall, Service Director of Safeguarding and Specialist Services CYPs	Corporate Parenting – Councillors Roles and Responsibilities The responsibility of the council to look after and protect children in their care
W/c 23rd May			
Rm G27 The Council House 23rd May (TBC)	10.00 – 12.30 OR 18.00 – 20.30	TBC	GroupWise , The Intranet and The Web
The Council House 24th May (TBC)	2 x 1.5 hours	Ian McDowall, Service Director Safeguarding and Specialist Services	Safeguarding Children - Councillors Roles and Responsibilities Protecting children from abuse or neglect, preventing impairment of their health and development, ensuring they are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
25th May The Council House	2.00pm – 5.00pm OR 6.00pm – 9.00pm	Joanne Mansfield, Principal Solicitor and Gary Collins, Service Manager (Development Management)	Development Control training (as per the Standards Committee, all councillors have to attend this training before sitting on a Development Control Committee)
W/c 30th May HALF TERM SCHOOL HOLIDAYS (No Sessions)			
W/c 6th June			
The Council House 6th June (TBC)	2 x 1.5 hours	Di Robinson, Service Director for Neighbourhoods and Communities	An Introduction to Neighbourhood Partnerships
The Council House 8th June (TBC)	2 x 1.5 hours	Sarah McMahon, Consultation and Research Coordinator	Finding out about your ward Introduction to using online maps and other applications to find information and what is happening in your ward.
W/c 13th June			
The Council House 13th June (TBC)	2 x 1.5 hours	Peter Robinson, Service Director: Finance	An Introduction to Local Government Finance

DATE & VENUE	TIME	WHO	WHAT
The Council House 14th June (TBC)	2 x 2 hours	Will Godfrey	Councillor Role in Commissioning

DATE & VENUE	TIME	WHO	WHAT
W/c 20th June			
The Council House 13th June (TBC)	2 x 1.5 hours	TBC (Chief Exec plus others?)	The Council Part 2– What new councillors need to know <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key policy changes (Localism Bill etc) • Partnerships and relationships (inc LEP, Core Cities, Police, LiNk etc) • Green Capital • Bigger picture stuff
The Council House (date TBC)	2 x 1.5 hours	Gillian Douglas, Equalities Manager and Joanna Roberts, Solicitor	Serving everyone in your ward
The Council House (date TBC)	2 x 3 hours	Legal Team (Pauline Powell)	Public Safety and Protection Committee (as per the Standards Committee, all councillors have to attend this training before sitting on a PSP Committee)
TBC The Council House (date TBC)	2 x 3 hours	Legal Team and Licensing Team (Pauline Powell and Nick Carter)	Licensing Briefing for Councillors as per the Standards Committee, all councillors have to attend this training before sitting on a Licensing Committee)
TBC W/c 4th July	10.00am – 3.00pm	Graham Sims, Deputy Chief Executive Richard Holden, Service Operation Manager, City Development	Tour of the City (including harbour side boat trip) **Inner City**
TBC	2 sessions	TBC	GroupWise , The Intranet and The Web
TBC	2 sessions	Legal	Town and Village Greens
TBC	2 sessions	Legal	Public Rights of Way
TBC	2 sessions	Paul Fudgell, Health and Safety Manager	Health and Safety