

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING BOARD**

---

**Date of meeting:** 25 March 2009  
**Report of:** Andrew Farrow, Head of Planning and Policy  
**Title:** Proposed training schedule for Councillors on Strategic Planning Board and Planning Committees.

---

### **1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To consider a programme of training for Councillors on Strategic Planning Board and Planning Committees post Vesting day.

### **2.0 Decision Required**

- 2.1. To propose that arrangements for an on-going programme of Councillor training be put in place to initially cover the matters identified in Appendix 1.

### **3.0 Financial Implications for Transition Costs**

- 3.1 None.

### **4.0 Financial Implications 2009/10 and beyond**

- 4.1 The bulk of training will be provided by Cheshire East staff or those working as part of a shared service arrangement, for which the only cost to the Authority will be their time. It is not expected that any external speakers or consultee would charge for their involvement in such sessions.

### **5.0 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 The Council has accepted that all Members who sit on Planning Board or Planning Committees should be trained and it is important that such training is on-going so Councillors develop a deep understanding of the planning system to allow them to make sound decisions.

### **6.0 Risk Assessment**

- 6.1 Should Councillors take decisions without being fully aware of all of the facts and issues regarding a particular development, or misunderstand particular evidence, this may increase the likelihood of a Judicial Review by an aggrieved party who would question the soundness of that decision.

## **7.0 Background and Options**

- 7.1 In 1997 as part of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (the Nolan Committee) various aspects of local government were addressed. One chapter was devoted to the planning system. This made a number of recommendations designed to ensure full public confidence in the planning process. One was that “All members of an authority’s planning committee (or equivalent) should receive training in the planning system, either before serving on the committee, or as soon as possible after their appointment to the committee”.
- 7.2 Central and Local Government embraced this recommendation and initial training was completed by Cheshire East’s planning councillors on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> March in advance of Vesting Day. These sessions were a basic introduction to the planning system for Members unfamiliar with this area, or acted as a refresher for more experienced Members.
- 7.3 Planning is an increasingly complex subject area with case law, advice and legislation constantly changing. It is therefore important that Members involved in Planning are kept up to date with changes through an on-going training programme to inform their decision making.
- 7.4 Areas to be addressed in training split into three broad groups:
- The Development Plan - from national and regional policies through to the saved policies of the existing five Local Plans and the Structure Plan;
  - Other material considerations e.g. highways issues; archaeology
  - Other new challenges for Cheshire East that are particularly pressing as a result of a proposed development or government initiative e.g. municipal waste technologies in advance of an application to determine a planning application for an Energy From Waste Plant.
- 7.5 To make the best use of Members’ time, it is proposed to undertake the training sessions prior to the formal opening of the Planning Board or Planning Committee. Each session is proposed to take 30 minutes with questions. It is important that these sessions are interactive and Members take time to reflect on matters raised within each session to consider how Cheshire East will respond to the points raised with regard to its Service delivery. Wherever possible, it is proposed to use existing staff to undertake the training to keep costs down and to increase familiarity between staff and Members. Sometimes it may be appropriate to have an external speaker, but it is hoped that no costs would result from such an approach, as it would undertaken as part of any local authority liaison role.

- 7.6 Some training matters may only be appropriate for a certain Committee or the Planning Board, and the attached Appendix identifies where this is the case. However, it is proposed that any Member should from a Board or Committee should be allowed to attend a training session at a Board or Committee that they do not regularly sit on. Appendix 1 broadly attempts to order topics in terms of priority so that Members are aware of the key matters as early as possible into the life of the new Authority, other topics may be brought forward in response to a particular application, or as a result of the recently completed training.

## **8.0 Reasons for Recommendation**

- 8.1 The proposed arrangements for Member training offer a practical and pragmatic approach post Vesting Day with the opportunity that they can be reviewed by the Strategic Planning Board during the first twelve months of operation.

### ***For further information:***

*Portfolio Holder: Jamie Macrae*

*Officer: Andrew Farrow*

*Tel No: 01270 529754*

*Email: [andy.farrow@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:andy.farrow@cheshireeast.gov.uk)*

# Appendix 1

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Training provider (internal or external)</b>	<b>Strategic Planning Board</b>	<b>Northern Committee</b>	<b>Southern Committee</b>
Saved policies of the Structure Plan, Macclesfield Local Plan	Internal	Y	Y	N
Saved policies of the Structure Plan, Crewe and Nantwich Local Plan and Congleton Local Plan	Internal	Y	N	Y
Regional Planning Policy	Internal	Y	Y	Y
Minerals and Waste Plans	Internal	Y	N	N
Highways (including parking standards, Traffic Impact Assessments)	Internal	Y	Y	Y
Enforcement matters	Internal	Y	Y	Y
Gypsy and travellers	External	N	Y	Y
Ecology (including surveys for protected species and mitigation)	Internal	Y	Y	Y
Flood risk and drainage	External?	Y	Y	Y
Design	External?	Y	Y	Y
Listed Buildings	Internal	N	Y	Y
Tree issues (including powers available)	Internal	Y	Y	Y
Landscape impacts (including visual impact assessments)	Internal	Y	Y	Y
The Council as a developer	Internal	Y	Y	Y
Regular updates on case law	Internal	Y	Y	Y
Other Environmental Impacts (noise, dust, vibrations) and mitigation	Internal	Y	Y	Y
Responding to climate change through the planning system	Internal	Y	Y	Y