

Member Learning and Development at



Copeland Borough Council

Training Year 1 May 2010 to 31 April 2011

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1. Introduction to Member Training at Copeland

Claire Dunn of Human Resources and Training Solutions was requested in June 2010 to complete Development Plans for Copeland Borough Council Members. The main purpose of this exercise is to gain accreditation to the North West Member Development Charter. In addition, I have included a Training Needs Development Matrix with recommendations on how to address these needs.

It should be noted that Copeland Borough Council need 75% of the 51 Members to complete a development plans to achieve the North West Member Development Charter.

When it comes to training, most Copeland Members express good intentions. A training needs analysis has been completed by talking to 39 Copeland Members. All training identified for Copeland Members should have the key objective of driving the Council towards achieving its mission – **“Leading the Transformation of West Cumbria to a Prosperous Future”, and delivering its six major priorities, as expressed in citizen consultation:**

1. Providing high quality, clean streets and open space;
2. Ensuring the area has good roads and good public transport;
3. Creating enough, different jobs to suit all;
4. Making Copeland a safer place to be;
5. Improving skills and education and keeping people with skills in Copeland;
6. Giving everyone good customer service.

2. Who makes Member Training happen at Copeland?

The Democratic Services Manager with the support from the Member Development Panel drives Member Training. The events organised in the past have involved External and Internal Training Providers. A summary of the attendance levels at these events could be said to be “unpredictable” depending on the subject matter and the time commitment the Member has.

Under the North West Development Charter the responsibility for Member Development is with the Member with an External Provider collating this information and advising the Democratic Services Manager as to how the Members Training Programme should be developed.

Each Member has differing commitments. Some find it difficult to commit to training events due to the fact they are have full time work commitments, and some find it easier as the role of being a Member is what they are committed to on a full time basis. Please note that only 65% of Member committed them to attend a Development Meeting. For this % of Members to attend it took much drive and energy over an 8 week period to achieve.

Therefore it may be necessary to review the member development process and change it to a Performance Management tool. The responsibility for Member Learning and Development could be a shared partnership between, the Leader of the Party, The Member, and the Democratic Services Manager. The Leader of the Parties’ role in Member Development could be critical and therefore, with this management tool, the Leaders of the Party could be able to address their Members performance and identify their training needs.

3. Identifying Individual Member Needs

From the Member Development Exercise of 2010/2011 the Copeland Member training needs have been identified and are detailed within the “Copeland Borough Council Member Individual Training Needs 2010 / 2011” document. A costing exercise needs to be completed as to how much it would cost to deliver all the Member Training needs that have been identified.

A wide variety of training needs (over 50 different training needs have been identified). As such, the first priority of the Democratic Services Manager should be to prioritise which needs are to be addressed first.

After each development meeting the Member was asked if they could confirm that the record was an accurate reflection of the meeting. As at the date of the report 36% have confirmed this. If they have not confirmed this the development plan will state "draft".

4. Current Copeland Member Development Process

The Copeland Member Development Process addresses the Members needs of:

- Wanting improved guidance on their roles;
- Offering the Members support to address these needs.

However, the author believes that with any system there is always a need to evaluate and develop.

When all the Learning Development Plans have been returned an evaluation of the 2010/11 Copeland Member Development Process needs to be completed with the Copeland Members as they are the "users" of the System. This could be done via a short questionnaire emailed to all Members.

When analysing the returned Learning Development Plans:

1. All members have had 'SMART' personal objectives set.
2. This exercise does not assess poor Member performance.
3. The "arranging" of the Member Development Meetings has been "pains taking". Therefore, a solution could be to "roll" the Member Development Plans out from "top to bottom" therefore ensuring that objectives are been cascaded down, for instance:
 - Week 1: Leaders of both parties - only when this has been completed is the next step addressed;
 - Week 2: Leader meets with their Executive Team – only when these have been completed is the next step addressed;
 - Week 3 and 4: Leader meets with all other Members. All Members are given a personal invite (which includes a date and time) to attend.

Note that all should be fully aware when "the Member Development Year" begins and these dates should be put in the diaries now! Please note that the Member Development Year is May to April.

4. The Member Learning and Development Plan could include "tick boxes" of activities that the Council chooses to request as mandatory, i.e. Induction, Health and Safety, Equality and Diversity, Data Protection, IT skills. This type of format would help the Leader of the Party during the interview and ensures him / her has not missed any key Council priorities / training needs.

5. Identifying Member Organisational Needs

The training needs below have been identified and summarised in the 5 main areas shown in the following table.

Summary	Detailed Information about the Training Needs Identified (denotes numbers of Members needing the training)	Possible Solutions to Address the Needs
BEST PRACTICE	Revisit the Members Code of Conduct (32) Locality Working (11) Increase Standards Knowledge (5) Local Government Finance and Funding (11) Scrutiny (12) Audit (7) Planning (3) Task and Finish (2) Government Legislation (3) Licensing (5) Housing (6) Environmental Issues (4) Compulsory Purchase (1) Council Tax (1) Shared Services (1) HR and H and S (3) Gambling and Alcohol (1) Managing Radio Active Waste (1) Credit Union (1) Tourism and Young Persons (1) Covalent System (1) OSC Training Programme (1) Involvement in the support of attendance at various external meetings (10)	Reading or by Copeland Officer Briefings
WARD SUPPORT	Develop Effective Relationships within the Ward (27)	NWE0 bespoke course

Summary	Detailed Information about the Training Needs Identified (denotes numbers of Members needing the training)	Possible Solutions to Address the Needs
SUPPORT AREAS	Time Management Skills (9) Communication / Networking and Engagement Skills (11) Change Management (5) Project Management (1) Enquiring Questions (1) Media Skills (3) Team Building (1) Presentational Skills Refresher (1) Delegation Techniques (1) Business Qualification (1) Involvement in Member Induction including being a Mentor (10)	External Course
IT	Develop IT Skills in Microsoft Packages (15) Increase Blackberry Knowledge (10)	External Course, Reading or Copeland Officer Coaching
MISCELLANEOUS	Parkinson UK (1) Champion Qualification (1) Mayoral Induction (1)	External Courses

To summarise the learning and development needs identified above can be addressed via:

- Structured Informal Learning; e.g. coaching and mentoring;
- Copeland Officer Briefings (of which many Members when asked said they “were of a good standard”)
- Formal training courses of various kinds; from very specific courses on technical aspects of jobs to courses on the wider skills identified above;
- Education; which might range from courses for at NVQs or Certificated Courses.

5.1 Finance

A Council, like any other business, should plan and tightly manage its financial performance. All Members are aware that the “Choosing to Change” implementation and with the many new directives from National Government may lead to financial pressures within local government next year.

Structured planning can make all the difference to the growth of a Council. It will enable Copeland to concentrate resources on improving profits, reducing costs and increasing returns on investment to their customers, i.e. the Copeland Constituents.

In fact, the type of financial training to non financial members doesn't have to be difficult or time-consuming. The most important thing is that financial plans are made; they are dynamic and are communicated to everyone involved.

6. Funding the Training

Currently the majority of training is funded via the Council however the Democratic Services Manager needs to keep up to date of new initiatives like Train to Gain and ECDL (where the training is funded by a government initiative).

Train to Gain is the government's flagship training service whose aim is to encourage all businesses and individuals to value and understand the benefits that learning and skills can bring and to invest in the most cost effective way.

7. Training Skills pledge

The North West Employee Charter means that Copeland has made a public commitment to support all its Members to develop their skills. This role cannot be completed by the Democratic Services Manager alone and therefore the Member Development Panel needs to act as Training Champions.

Their roles should be to work with members to help them promote the training and development policy by encouraging, facilitating and initiating learning for their staff. The author feels that this is a crucial role. Each Member of the panel should be equipped with how to do this role.

Lastly, all Copeland Members must also take their own personal skills pledge as the Democratic Services Manager is frequently disappointed when people do not turn up on training events. The role of arranging training is a great deal of time and effort into organising events that delegates do not turn up due to "other priorities" – what is more important than your own development!

8. The Current Training Staff Resources

The author has reviewed the current function, in respect to the Copeland Member Training Section and the findings are as follows:

- There is no full-time Learning and Development Role. The role is a small section of the Democratic Services Manager. This part of his role may not always be addressed as a priority. The Member Learning and Development role needs to have time to concentrate only "on the learning and development of Copeland Members".
- The Democratic Services Manager controls the training budget but does not monitor if the money is being spent wisely. There are no monthly reports on Learning and Development costs / spends and how they have added value to Copeland Members. Copeland should aim to prove that 90% of all training was not a waste of time
- Choosing the correct external training to provide the most appropriate training solution can be a lengthy exercise. Copeland need to keep on the mailing list for any local "one off courses" that might fulfil specific training needs, i.e. the Cumbria Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Carlisle work in partnership with many organisations and can provide reasonable half day local workshops. The West Cumbria Strategic Partnership has run a skills and knowledge programme events (Jan to March 2007) starting with an awareness session of "what the partnership actually does and what benefits there are to joining".
- Branding is always important to any service that is being delivered and the correct image of the product you are trying to encourage people to use can make a difference to how customers approach this. In meeting with the Communications section of Copeland, they have advised on how to develop a branding for Member Learning and Development at Copeland. They can publish the training to all employees via the Word, Team Talk, Notice Boards and the intranet. This would demonstrate that Copeland has acted following the

Member Development Meetings. In addition, training Courses Information can be advertised on the Intranet.

- The Member Room could have a facility where laptop / desktop computers can be set up for any online training to be delivered. Copeland could subscribe to relevant professional publications and create a pleasant environment for staff to read and develop.

9. Identifying Learning Activities

When identifying the Members training needs, the Author has identified what they believe to be the correct form of learning activity to address the "need".

As stated earlier, it is not clear if the Members are aware of what is "out there" in the field of Training Providers. Copeland need to use a Web Page on the Intranet to show what type of training courses there in the form of a training pick list.

It should be noted that a Learning Activities does not always just have to be the completion of an External Course, it can take the form of; Coaching, Mentoring, Reading, Attending a Meeting, i.e. any exercise that develops an employee's knowledge base which helps them perform their role at Copeland well. After research, three Learning Activities in Copeland have been identified below which the author believes if managed well, would bring many benefits to Copeland Members.

9.1 *Member Induction at Copeland*

In May 2011 there is a possibility of new Members being recruited and some may have no local government experience; therefore Induction is critical.

The outcome of this aims to set the scene for all new Members so that they have a better understanding of the Council's aims and priorities, a better understanding of their role and improved skills to do their role.

May 2011 could be the correct time to review the Member Induction Process at Copeland.

A proposed way forward:

- Day before new Member starts HR meets with the Democratic Services Manager to ensure all documentation is completed and a date and time for the new recruit to attend Induction;
- New Inductees attend Member Copeland Induction Programme. This consists of the structure of the organisation, the Corporate Plan, their relevant departments service plan, key health and safety information, Member Code of Conduct, the Constitution, how to use their email, how to find a telephone number etc all this can be completed via a PowerPoint presentation.
- Lastly, the inductees attend a meeting and refreshments with the Chief Executive, Leader and the Directors with the main purpose of a "welcome to Copeland" and a "get to know you session" of empowering and inspiring the new Member with how they can transform West Cumbria.
- Given a Mentor however, mentors and mentees need trained on what their roles are

9.2 *Mentoring and Coaching*

Mentoring is a long standing form of training, learning and development and an increasingly popular tool for supporting personal development traditionally, mentoring is the long term passing on of support, guidance and advice.

Mentoring is used specifically and separately as a form of long term tailored development for the individual which brings benefits to the organisation. The characteristics of mentoring are:

- It is essentially a supportive form of development;
- It focuses on helping an individual improve skills;
- Personal issues can be discussed more productively unlike in coaching where the emphasis is on performance at work;

- Mentoring activities have both organisational and individual goals.

The author believes that the Copeland Members would benefit from this learning activity for all their employees. A Copeland Member Mentoring Network would have to be developed and this would involve research, training and management.

9.3 E-learning / Computer Based Learning

The results of the CIPD's 2008 Learning and Development Survey believes that e-learning is most effective when combined with classroom learning. The advantages of E-Learning are:

- On-demand availability enables the learner to complete training conveniently at off-hours or from home;
- Self-pacing for slow or quick learners reduces stress and increases satisfaction;
- Interactivity engages users, pushing them rather than pulling them through training;
- Confidence that refresher or quick reference materials are available reduces burden of responsibility of mastery.

The disadvantages of e-learning are:

- Technology issues of the learners are most commonly technophobia and unavailability of required technologies;
- Portability of training has become a strength of e-learning with the proliferation of network linking points, notebook computers, PDAs, and mobile phones, but still does not rival that of printed workbooks or reference material;
- Reduced social and cultural interaction can be a drawback. The impersonality, suppression of communication mechanisms such as body language, and elimination of peer-to-peer learning that are part of this potential disadvantage are lessening with advances in communications technologies.

The Democratic Services role needs to work closely with the IT department as on research Copeland has IT licences (which offer free training places) that are not being fully utilised.

Same Difference is an example of E-learning at Copeland. On reflection this has not been as effective as they could have been however as stated earlier, it's believed that if the Member Development Room was utilised as a "Central room in the Copeland Centre" as a Member Learning and Development Room where the Member could use as which was set up with "laptops / desktops" that this would encourage E-learning.

9.4 The Future of Learning Activities

As a Human Resources and Training Professional we are challenged to find new ways to engage employees in learning beyond the traditional classroom environment. The growth of mobile technology provides a significant opportunity to change the way we think about and provide skills training. Mobile learning will enable our employees to learn independently; at a time and place that suits them. Mobile learning can be best provided in the form of a text message service to a mobile phone. Standalone learning, on the other hand, such as a short courses or modules, makes iPods and mp3 players a more obvious choice. Mobile phone and mp3 players can allow learners to assess bite sized information such as online quizzes and assessments when they need them.

However the author believes that it is when we bring the learners together that a more crucial contribution is made and for this reason, an end to face to face learning cannot be foreseen – as it is the most powerful means of connecting human beings, i.e. in the Member Training Room. It is believed that we should always appreciate the social component of learning.

10. Evaluating the Outcomes

After research it can be apparent that the training solution chosen to address the training solution had been incorrect therefore on evaluation it is not to be used again.

The most popular model and well established for evaluating a training programme uses Donald Kirkpatrick's 4 levels of evaluation.

1. Reaction of student – what they thought and felt about the training
2. Learning – the resulting increase in knowledge or capability
3. Behaviour – extent of behaviour and capability and improvement implementation / application
4. Results – the effect on the business or environment resulting from the trainee's performance

Cutting to the chase, it is suggested there is only one indicator that counts – level 4!

Evaluation of training is completed after the course. On review evaluation should take place before and 3 to 6 months after. It is believed that the Democratic Services Manager should be a central source to review if the training budget is being used effectively.

Copeland wants to see a change in Members behaviours after training. We want to see striving to link learning and development and business strategy. We want to facilitate learning through a wide variety of interventions that has a positive impact on organisational performance.

10.1 *The benefits of investing into the Training Budget*

What are the benefits of investing this money into the Member Training Budget at Copeland Borough Council? They are:

- The Copeland constituents are well looked after and the service they receive will be of the highest standard;
- A culture of lifelong learning will be promoted.

It has been suggested that it should be the Copeland Constituents that evaluate if training has been effective; this would be a huge exercise however other indicators could be utilised:

- Copeland Members will have a satisfaction and confidence that they are doing their particular role to the standard required by Copeland;
- The Copeland Member will know how their work fits into the wider organisational picture of the Copeland Corporate Plan / Best Value Performance Plan 2007 – 2012;
- The Copeland Member will take responsibility for their own continuing development and future career.

10.2 *Successes for Copeland Members*

Finally, let us celebrate with the Copeland Members on their successes. Regular presentations of certificates / awards should take place where achievements are to be recognised.

Learning and development are key to the success of any successful business - Copeland need to ensure that Managers recognise this and employ "reward and recognition" techniques.

11. Recommendations

The following recommendations have been identified in order to achieve the North West Member Development Charter. The recommendations are summarised in the form of a tabular Five-Phase Action Plan.

Phase	Area to address	Proposed Timing
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report issued to Copeland Borough Council's Democratic Services Manager for his comments and commitment 	July 2010
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The remaining Member Performance Development Plans to be completed week commencing 6 September 2010 	September 2010
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenge and prioritise individual Member training needs Identify how much it would cost to address all the Member training needs Review the budget ; funding amount and who is responsible Agree Proposed Training Programme with Member Development Panel After Training Programme Agreed tender exercise for Training Providers; Time Management etc In addition, Internal Copeland Officers to agree what they would be prepared to deliver Review the Member Induction Process Review the Member Development Process 	September 2010
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training Delivered 	September 2010 to April 2011
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning Development Reviews to take place 	October 2010

On all stages need to gain commitment from the Member Development Panel to the phase and communicate to all Copeland Members on the progress of the developing Member Learning and Development Function and always evaluating the completion of each phase before progressing to the next stage.

At the end of each phase a review and evaluation needs to be completed to ensure that the recommendation, has added value to the Copeland Organisation.

12. Conclusions

Member Training at Copeland has been completed however it could be done so much better and therefore driving the Council towards achieving the transformation of West Cumbria to a prosperous future.

There is a need for more emphasis on the Member Learning and Development Role at Copeland.

Review of the 2010/11 Member Development Process is necessary as it has a need to be developed further for 2011/12.

The Member Training Budget needs to have clear guidelines of who spends what.

There are many learning activities Copeland is not fully utilising, i.e. induction, mentoring and coaching, E-learning – Copeland needs to research further.

Evaluation is not being completed well and therefore it is not ensured that the Member Training budget is being invested into the Corporate Objectives of the Council, i.e. Transforming West Cumbria.

13. Acknowledgements

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