

Member Training Update

Report of the Treasurer

For further information about this report please contact Keith Dixon, Treasurer, on 01743 260201.

1 Purpose of Report

This report updates Members on training Issues.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked for its views on the detailed responses to the training questionnaire.

It is also asked to consider whether it wishes a 'performance' training session in December, and how this could tie into the way the Committee would like to carry out its duties.

3 Background

At the last meeting the Committee agreed that Treasury Management be the first topic of the next training session; that the skills assessment questionnaire be circulated to new Members of the Committee in order to assess potential training priorities; and that sessions should be held before a Committee or Authority meeting. It was also asked whether a session on performance could be included in the training programme.

4 Treasury Management

This is seen as a priority, because the Committee is to review our practices once the new CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) code and guidance notes have been issued. These have still not yet been released, and Shropshire Council, who provide our Treasury Services, do not expect to reissue their codes until the new year.

At that point we will review ours both to take account of how the new code affects us directly as well as to incorporate any changes made by Shropshire Council.

5 Skills Assessment Questionnaire

The updated results are attached at the appendix. The main areas that Members identify as being potentially difficult are some financial and risk concepts. These could be relatively easily addressed, especially in the case of 'risk' where the committee does have Members with knowledge of the subject.

There may be a case for some financial skills training. Equally there is evidence of a lack of legal matters experience. The other areas where some lack of confidence may be present is the role of auditors, and how these are carried out. This may reflect member changes, and there should be a chance to pick up on this, as both internal and external auditors attend Committee meetings through the year

6 Performance

The form and content of a training session on performance, to be held before the December Fire Authority meeting, could be discussed. This could link with the review of how performance data is presented to the Committee, and how the Committee could best help the Authority drive continuous improvement.

7 Financial Implications

It is expected that any costs arising from decisions made about training can be accommodated within existing budgets.

8 Legal Comment

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

9 Equality Impact Assessment

Officers have considered the Service's Brigade Order on Equality Impact Assessments (Personnel 5 Part 2) and have decided that there are no discriminatory practices or differential impacts upon specific groups arising from this report. An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has not, therefore, been completed.

10 Appendix

Member Skills Assessment

11 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk), the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Balanced Score Card		Integrated Risk Management Planning	
Business Continuity Planning		Legal	
Capacity		Member Involvement	*
Civil Contingencies Act		National Framework	
Comprehensive Performance Assessment		Operational Assurance	
Efficiency Savings		Retained	
Environmental		Risk and Insurance	
Financial		Staff	
Fire Control/Fire Link		Strategic Planning	
Information Communications and Technology		West Midlands Regional Management Board	
Freedom of Information / Data Protection / Environmental Information		Equality Impact Assessment	

AUDIT COMMITTEE – MEMBERS SKILLS ASSESSMENT

Name:

This form enables you to check what you already know about the Audit Committee, and to identify the topic areas in which you want to develop your knowledge and skills.

Work through the form and assess yourself by ticking the appropriate column.

The audit committee	Strongly agree	Confident	Comfortable	Disagree
	Very confident			Not confident
I am conversant with, and understand, the objectives and current significant issues facing the Authority.	2	2		
I have an understanding of the Authority's structure.	3	2		
I could identify the key relationships that the Authority has with external partner organisations.	2	2	1	
I have an understanding of relevant legislation and other rules governing the operation of the Authority.	2	1	1	1
I am familiar with the Authority's Constitution.	1	4		
I understand what is meant by Standing Orders and Schemes of Delegation.	2	2	1	
I could explain the relevance of Financial Regulations.	2	1	1	1
I have a broad understanding of the local government environment.	2	3		
I am aware of current major initiatives which affect the Authority.		4	1	
I can explain why the authority has an Audit Committee and what it does.	1	3	1	
I can outline the terms of reference of my own authority's Audit Committee.		4		1

I can describe the membership of an Audit Committee.	1	3		
I could identify the delegated powers of the Audit Committee.	1	3		1
I can describe how internal and external auditors are appointed.	1	2		2
I can describe the difference between the roles of internal and external audit.		2		1
I could identify other external inspection agencies, and their role.			1	3
I can outline the purpose and content of the reports that are submitted by internal and external auditors which are reviewed by the Audit Committee.		2		1
I understand the relevance of making audit recommendations and the importance of implementing them.		2	2	
I am comfortable in identifying and evaluating risks that could arise from the failure to implement audit recommendations.	1	2		1
I understand what is meant by the audit strategy, and the period that the Audit Strategic Plan covers.		2	1	1
I can outline the purpose and content of the annual audit plan and the responsibility of the Committee to monitor progress against the plan.		3		1
I understand what is meant by an 'audit needs assessment' and the process involved in establishing these assessments .		1	1	2
I can outline the purpose and content of the Annual Governance Statement and understand what is meant by the authority's framework of internal control.		3	1	1
I understand what is meant by the external auditors opinion on the Statement of Accounts.		3		1

I could explain the difference between a qualified and an unqualified opinion.	1	1	1	1
I am able to interpret the content of the Annual Accounts, and understand the following accounting terms:				
• Capital receipts	2	1		2
• Deferred charges	1	1		3
• Deferred liabilities	1	1		3
• Contingent liabilities	1	1		3
• Collection fund	2		1	3
• Precept.	3			1
I could explain the difference between a 'provision' and a 'reserve' in the accounts.		2	1	1
I am confident in making a judgement on the adequacy of the maintenance of proper accounting records by the authority.		3		
I understand the purpose and relevance of the External Auditor's Management Letter.		3		1
I understand what is meant by Risk Management and Corporate Governance in relation to my duties as a member of the Audit Committee.		3	2	
I could explain what an inherent risk is.		2	1	2
I could explain what is meant by a residual risk, and give examples.		1	1	3
I understand what a Gershon saving is.		3		2
I know what ISA stands for.	1	3		1
I could identify the principal risk associated with failing to achieve the ISA standard or CIPFA's Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government.		1	2	1
I could evaluate the effectiveness of my own authority's Audit Committee.	1	2		2
I can describe an Audit Committee's responsibilities in relation to the investigation of fraud and irregularities.		3	2	

I am conversant with the policies that the Audit Committee is required to review and approve on a regular basis, and the purpose of these documents.	1	1	2	1
I feel confident in seeking clarification of any information presented to me, or statement made to me, that I do not understand.	3	2		
I understand the relevance of Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 to the Council.	2		2	1
I understand what is meant by the 'Use of Resources Judgement'.	2	1	1	1
I could explain what a fundamental system is and give some examples.	1		2	2
I can name the Section 151 Officer.	1		2	1
I could give examples of systems on which the use of IT audit would be applied.	1		2	2

In order to establish that there is a 'balance' of skills represented across the Audit Committee membership, please evaluate how experienced you are in the following areas:

	Very experienced	Confident	Comfortable	No experience
Finance – in a professional capacity		1	1	3
Finance - Local Government	1	1	1	2
Legal matters			3	2
HR/Staffing		2	2	1
Risk Management		2	3	
Audit and Internal Control Assurance		1	2	1
Other technical skills relevant of the Council	1	1	1	
The authority's governance and regulatory framework		4	1	

