

**PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF PLANNING TRAINING FOR MEMBERS**

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**1. SUMMARY**

It is proposed to establish a programme of Member training in respect of planning related subject areas in order to improve knowledge of the planning system, the legislative and policy framework within which it operates, and the procedural aspects of the quasi-judicial decision-making process. This will be of particular benefit for Members who have recently joined the PPSL Committee, will reinforce the knowledge of longer-term Members, and will be made available to non-PPSL Members who wish to avail themselves of a better understanding of the planning process.

**2. REPORT**

Member training in planning matters has tended to be limited to basic introductory information as part of the councillors' induction process and to occasional specific training in response to particular initiatives or events, such as the 'Modernising Planning' agenda or the introduction of Local Review Bodies, for example. There has not been an on-going programme of training to improve general awareness or understanding, nor to address those matters which have been identified by Members as being areas where knowledge has been lacking.

The modernisation of planning cannot be achieved by legislative and procedural changes alone. In addition to the need for officers to broaden their competencies and to engage in Continual Professional Development, it is also necessary for Members to develop the confidence to be able to participate in decision-making knowledgeably, with an appropriate level of understanding of the planning process, an appreciation of the key planning issues of importance in Argyll and Bute, and understanding of the policy and administrative context within which the planning system operates. This is particularly important in the context of maintaining probity in the planning process, in ensuring transparency in terms of procedure and outcomes, and having regard to the quasi-judicial nature of planning decisions which are made by Members.

It is considered that identified deficiencies can be best addressed by a systematic programme of training, concentrating initially on those areas listed on the following page. Members' comments about the proposed programme of training are invited, and suggestions for further topics warranting inclusion are welcomed. It is suggested that training events be open to all Members, including those who do not currently have a role in planning decision-making, on the basis that it will improve their understanding when they are contacted by constituents or are asked to act as advocates for persons making representations.

The main purpose of the training is to provide insight into areas which are relevant to the consideration of planning applications and local reviews by Members, with the intention of targeting content so that it can be delivered primarily by way of 'bite sized' sessions associated with the PPSL calendar of meetings. This should help to

maximise participation and will avoid the inconvenience of Members having to attend additional sessions unrelated to programmed commitments. These events would be augmented by participation by partners such as key consultees, by way of occasional half-day workshops to enable some interactive participation, and by occasional site visits where an appreciation of development can be best achieved at first hand.

An initial programme for the remainder of 2013 is suggested as follows:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Committee day training</b>	<b>Half day workshop</b>	<b>Visit</b>
Feb 2013	Material planning considerations		
March 2013	Planning conditions and legal agreements		
April 2012			Tangy windfarm and Wind Towers factory
May 2013		Competent motions	
June 2013		Local Development Plan	
August 2013	Role of Scottish Natural Heritage		
September 2013	Local Review Bodies		
October 2013	Biodiversity, Natura and appropriate assessment		
November 2013	Role of SEPA		
December 2013	Planning Enforcement		

### 3. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Members:

- i) Agree to the establishment of an ongoing programme of planning related training for Members of the PPSL Committee, which should also be open to any other Members not currently involved in planning decision-making;
- ii) Endorse the initial subject areas for training and the provisional dates for delivery, on the understanding that the programme may be varied to take account of any additional training requirements Members may wish to identify, along with any other particular training needs identified by officers as a consequence of matters emerging during the course of the year.

### 3. IMPLICATIONS

3.1	Policy	Nil
3.2	Financial	It is considered that the level of training required can be delivered internally from existing resources with assistance as necessary from external partners at no cost, without recourse to having to buy in training from external providers.
3.3	Personnel	Nil
3.4	Equalities Impact Assessment	Nil
3.5	Legal	Nil

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