CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR MEMBERS

Review of the first 12 months of Session 5

Executive summary

1. The Leadership Group is asked to note this summary of the first 12 months of the continuous professional development (CPD) programme for Members and agree the recommendations that have arisen from the review.

Issues and options

2. This paper is split into four parts:
   i. CPD for Members during Session 4
   ii. the initial CPD courses run in May and June 2016
   iii. the further CPD work from September 2016 to May 2017
   iv. the recommendations stemming from this work

i. CPD for Members during Session 4
3. In March 2012 the Conveners Group and the Presiding Officer endorsed a proposal to develop a CPD programme for Members. This would seek to build on the induction programme for new Members as well as the existing support for Members which the Scottish Parliament then offered. The work was taken forward by the Committee Office in 2012/13 and included interviewing over 40 of the 2011 intake of Members, seeking the approval of Business Managers to the Parliament’s plans as well as running a number of pilot courses. The project was then paused ahead of the Scottish Independence Referendum.

4. The project was restarted in 2015 with the establishment of a working group to design a CPD programme for Members for roll-out at the beginning of Session 5. The group spoke to a further 25 Members, both relatively new and those more experienced, to help get a further feel of their experiences of becoming a Member as well as what their on-going needs were (these finding were also passed to the Election Planning Board). It was clear from speaking with Members that the first weeks following the election were critical in their development.

5. The working group reported regularly to the LG and SPCB on its progress.
ii. The initial CPD courses run in May and June 2016

First week of Session 5

6. The Election Planning Board’s planned series of orientation sessions would give Members introductions to various aspects of parliamentary procedure and practice as well as practical information on employing staff, setting up a local office and securing accommodation. The initial CPD programme would therefore stem from this initial work.

Pre-summer recess

7. The working group was keen that the planned and well considered work of the election planning Board during the first few days of Session 5 continued into the following weeks. It therefore, having taken soundings from the outgoing Presiding Officer and with the agreement of the LG and SPCB, chose three courses to be run prior to the summer recess which would be of immediate use to Members. This was to meet the working group’s approach that everything it offered should be relevant, timely and to a high standard in order to best support Members to be effective parliamentarians.

8. The initial courses were on:

- parliamentary speechwriting;
- handling the media; and
- being a parliamentarian.

9. The first two courses were run prior to parliamentary business starting. This allowed courses to be held during a business day but without cutting across committee or the Chamber. Given the specialist knowledge required for the first two courses, these were both delivered by external trainers.

10. The speechwriting course was designed to help Members with planning and rhetorical techniques for drafting speeches, with a particular focus on delivering their first speeches in the Chamber. A total of 31 MSPs attended one of the four sessions across two days. The overall feedback of the course was excellent. One MSP said:

“The course leader was great- knowledgeable and easy to listen to. I know that I will be referring to the points that he made when I come to write my speeches. I though the timing was appropriate as was the time it was held, thank you for having this arranged.”

11. The handling the media course was also held over four sessions across two days and was aimed at helping Members understand what the media might want from them and to feel more confident in their interactions with journalists. 20 Members attended the initial course with 11 of those attending a follow-up one to one mock interview session with the trainer. Again, feedback was very positive with one MSP writing:
“I found the session very useful and I thought that the course leader’s knowledge and delivery was excellent. I think 2 hours was a suitable length of time. This is a critical part of the induction programme and should be offered in future.”

12. Finally, the ‘being a parliamentarian course’ was run as a one-off lunchtime seminar after parliamentary business had begun. This was led by the Presiding Officer Presiding Officer to give his thoughts to new Members on what it means to be a parliamentarian combined with a Q&A session with a representative from a number of groups and bodies who have a substantial role in assisting the Parliament and parliamentarians in their work. These were:

   i. The Scottish Government
   ii. The Scottish Law Commission
   iii. Audit Scotland; and
   iv. The Law Society of Scotland

Summary of initial courses
13. Overall, the initial series of courses was a success, with 40 MSPs taking part in at least one of the session and the overall feedback was very positive. The sessions prior to parliamentary business formally commencing were the most successful – combining relevant and timely courses with flexibility of scheduling. The third course, while very worthy, was compromised by finding a time which suited both Members and speakers. If this was to be replicated in Session 5, it might be better to do something with the (possibly outgoing) Presiding Officer during the orientation week.

14. Another positive was the good relationships with Business Managers throughout the work who were invaluable in helping to promote the course with their Members.

iii. The further CPD work from September 2016 to May 2017
15. Prior to the 2016 election the working group was keen that the planned and well considered work in the first months of Session 5 be followed by equally well considered and planned work. It therefore sought approval from the LG and SPCB to run the following courses:

   i. questioning techniques for committees;
   ii. understanding the budget; and
   iii. understanding legislation.

16. The working group was nonetheless keen that for the programme to continue to meet Members’ needs, it must be responsive to their needs. Additional courses should therefore be run as and when required by MSPs. These courses have since been taken forward by the SRO supported by a grade 5 and a grade 4 in the Committee Office.
17. During this period, a CPD network meeting involving officials from all four UK legislatures was held in the Scottish Parliament. This was a valuable opportunity to exchange good practice and ideas for future sessions, as well as lessons learned from recent courses. The Presiding Officer met with the network and talked of his support for the programme and its aims.

**Questioning techniques course**

18. This course was aimed at supporting MSPs in their committee duties by focusing on how to undertake their role of effectively questioning a range of different witnesses. This had previously been run to some success in Session 4 and it was considered a worthwhile addition in Session 5.

19. While the course is now running and has received very positive feedback from Members and clerks, it took longer to set-up than initially hoped. This was primarily due to the procurement exercise which pushed the commencement date from Autumn 2016 to the beginning of 2017. This is currently being promoted within the Committee Office. Nevertheless, the initial feedback from the first three courses has been very encouraging, with clerking teams reporting strong engagement from Members, a willingness to discuss a committee-wide approach to questioning as well as Members being happy to critique their own work.

**Understanding the budget course**

20. As the first budget of Session 5 was the first to include the new revenue raising powers of the 2016 Scotland Act, it was to be a first for both new and existing Members. In discussion with the Finance and Constitution Committee, one-hour sessions with up to six Members were arranged in the week preceding the Draft Budget 2017-18’s introduction. These were led by the F&C Committee’s budget adviser as well as a researcher from the Financial Scrutiny Unit. In total 27 MSPs attended the course with a further three interested but unable to attend any of the sessions (they were subsequently put in touch with the FSU researcher). While the majority who attended were new Members, four were from Session 4 and another who expressed interest joined in Session 3.

21. The feedback from the course was again overwhelmingly positive. For example:

   “I found the session very useful. Length of session was perfect, not too long but sufficient to cover my queries. Not too many attendees but enough to raise issue that I overlooked. The discussion was well led, perhaps a more detailed handout would have been helpful with up to date timelines. Trainer was spot on!”

**Understanding legislation course**

22. The structure of this course has been tweaked to focus on Stage 3 proceedings given that both clerks and the legislation team advise Members during the committee stages of a bill. However, as the first Stage 3s in June 2017 will be a first for many Members as well as to the PO and
DPOs, sessions to help both new and returning Members to better understand the function and process of Stage 3 debates have been organised. Following contact with Business Managers and a formal invitation by the Presiding Officer, initial take-up has been very positive. Led by the legislation team, these are to be run on the 30th and 31st of May and, given their success, will follow a similar format as the budget sessions.

Disability training
23. As stated above, one of the desires of the CPD programme was to be responsive to Members’ needs. One such need stemmed from a campaign group who called on the parliament to provide training to increase the awareness and understanding of issues affecting disabled people. Following a number of Members speaking with the Presiding Officer about the campaigns aims as well as meeting with the PO himself, it was agreed that the Parliament would run such a course. This work is currently ongoing but it is hoped that the course will be run shortly after the 2017 summer recess.

Summary of initial courses
24. The September to May series of courses has seen mixed result. While the content of the questioning techniques course has so far been a success, its delayed start has meant that not as many committees are taking up the opportunity as might have been hoped. Conversely, the budget and Stage 3 courses, both led by officials, have proved very popular with both new and existing Members, showing that when MSPs are offered support which they see as both relevant and timely, they will take advantage of such opportunities.

25. The first year of the CPD programme has also pointed to a sense of normality being fostered around Members training; where both MSPs and the people of Scotland consider the orientation and on-going CPD options as an inherent part of the Parliament’s support so that they might be as effective as possible in their work.

Possible future courses
26. The LG’s programme of quarterly meetings with Members has been a good outlet for identifying possible future courses. This should perhaps become a formal question in all such interviews. One such issue which has been raised on a number of occasions is dealing with challenging constituents. A trial of this course was run in 2013 but did not quite meet Members’ requirements. A better iteration of this will need to be developed. Outwith Members’ interviews there has also been a suggestion on reflecting on the nature of parliamentarians and scrutiny which might be led by the PO.

iv. recommendations stemming from this work
27. Based on the summary of the first year of the CPD programme, the following recommendations are suggested:
i. that the currently agreed courses are delivered while additional courses are explored;
ii. any additional courses stem from Members needs which will in part be identified through the quarterly interviews with MSPs; and
iii. the initial courses run in Session 5 will be considered and where appropriate built upon for Session 6.

Publication Scheme

28. This paper can be published.

Decision

29. The Leadership Group is invited to note the review as well as whether to agree the four recommendations in paragraph 27.

Committee Office
May 2017