



**Governance and Audit
Committee**

Tuesday, 15 October 2019

Subject: Member Development - Annual Report

Report by:

Executive Director of Resources

Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

To demonstrate progress to date and to set out the plans of the Member Development Group over the coming years.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. That Members accept this report as an accurate reflection of Member Development over the past municipal year;
2. That Members approve the priorities as identified by the Member Development Group, those being: online training options, the induction process for Members elected through by-elections and initial work on the full 2023 Induction Programme;
3. That Members agree to receive a further report no later than April 2020 in which options for alternative methods of delivery (ie, online training options) will be detailed and approval sought for actions in the 2020/21 municipal year.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: Members must receive training to sit on certain previously agreed Committees. If this training is not provided, the Council could be open to judicial review.

Financial: FIN/83/20/SL Member Development has existing budgets allocated of £10,000 per municipal year and an additional rolling £9,000. There are no new financial implications at this stage however this may be amended once alternative delivery options are identified.

Staffing: Any staffing requirements for training events or development opportunities would be met within existing staff numbers and there are no additional duties identified outside of existing job roles.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights: Consideration has been given to how training expectations may impact Members' travel requirements and how these can be limiting according to location or disability. Alternative methods of delivery will aim to further alleviate any individual difficulties.

Risk Assessment: N/A

Data Protection Implications: N/A

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities: N/A

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Report to G&A Committee 19 June 2018:

<https://democracy.west-lindsey.gov.uk/documents/s8574/Member%20Development%20-%20Committee%20Report%20GA%20June%202018.pdf>

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

X

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

X

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Governance and Audit Committee is responsible for the monitoring of Member Development and has committed to receiving an annual report in order to maintain oversight.
- 1.2 This report seeks to demonstrate what has been achieved throughout 2018/19, with specific focus on the 2019 Induction Programme following the all-out elections in May 2019.
- 1.3 Following the first year of the Member Development Group, this report will highlight the priorities of the group for the coming year and beyond.

2 Summary of Development 2018/19

- 2.1 In comparison with other years, there were fewer development sessions provided in 2018/19. This was, in part, because all statutory training had been maintained within previous years meaning there were no Members considered 'out of date' with training for committees such as Planning or Licensing.
- 2.2 Alongside the internally provided sessions such as those for Statements of Accounts, CIL and Neighbourhood Plans, there were sessions provided by Officers from the East Midlands Regional Cyber Crime Unit (regarding cyber security) and the East Midlands Special Operations Unit – Special Branch (discussing prevention of terrorism and extremism).
- 2.3 Attendance figures were relatively low in comparison with the previous year. Average attendance in 2017/18 was around a third of all Councillors. In 2018/19, this dropped to below a fifth, with an average attendance of just 18.3%.
- 2.4 It was recognised, by Officers and Members alike, that priorities for the 2018/19 municipal year were focussed elsewhere and for this reason, development sessions were kept to a minimum.
- 2.5 In addition to changing priorities for Councillors, the Member Development Group was tasked with preparing the Induction Programme for 2019, details of which are given below.

3 Induction Programme 2019

- 3.1 The Induction Programme ran from the night of the all-out elections on 2 May 2019, through to the end of May with a small selection of sessions provided in June.
- 3.2 Nearly all Elected Members received a West Lindsey District Council Welcome Pack on the night of the election results. Those who were not present on the night received them at their Acceptance of Office signing

on Tuesday 7 May. The Welcome Pack was designed to be a 'go to' reference point for the key information considered relevant for both new and returning Councillors.

- 3.3 During the sessions on 7 May, members of the Democratic Services team spoke with Councillors on an individual basis regarding the aims of the Induction Programme. The initial three-week programme consisted of ten main topics with sessions offered in daytime and evening slots. Each topic was allocated two sessions with the aim of enabling Councillors to attend at a time to best suit them.
- 3.4 The initial induction topics were not considered mandatory for Councillors although it was highly recommended that newly elected Members attended as many sessions as they could. Returning Councillors were advised that it would also be beneficial for them to attend in order to understand any changes or updates that may have taken place since the last time they attended relevant sessions.
- 3.5 For those committees where there is a mandatory element of training required (ie Planning, Licensing, Regulatory and Governance and Audit Committees), the sessions were compulsory for members of the committee but all Councillors were invited to attend.
- 3.6 Full attendance details are provided in Appendix 1 however the average attendance across all sessions was 31.84%. This figure is slightly distorted by the fact that some of the mandatory sessions were only compulsory for a small number of Councillors. The average attendance across non-mandatory sessions was 33.01%.
- 3.7 At the conclusion of the induction period, once all mandatory and non-mandatory sessions had been completed, Councillors were contacted individually for their feedback on three main areas: the Welcome Pack, the Induction Programme as a whole and the individual sessions they had attended. For those Councillors who had not attended any sessions, they were asked to provide feedback as to why they had not attended. This was in order to gauge whether there was anything that could be done differently to engage with those Councillors.
- 3.8 Of the 36 Members, 20 responses were received. This was a response rate of 55.56% which is above average in comparison with other feedback requests within the Democratic Services team. Feedback was, on the whole, positive across all aspects of the induction period. A full summary is provided in Appendices 2 and 2a, the main points are given below.
- 3.9 Feedback on the West Lindsey District Council Welcome Pack
Very positive overall and several returning Councillors commented that the pack was better than anything they had received previously. That said, there is room for improvement as there have been requests for additional information such as a map of the building / meeting rooms and a schedule of meetings dates as far into the future as possible.

3.10 Feedback on the Induction Programme

This was specifically asking for comments and thoughts on the content of the programme, such as the timings of the sessions and whether the summary information was sufficient. On the whole, Councillors spoke favourably about the programme although there was an overall sense that sessions could be better tailored towards either new Councillors, or returning Councillors, rather than trying to address both levels of knowledge in one session.

3.11 Feedback on Induction Sessions

There was a range of comments regarding individual sessions and, not surprisingly, there was a difference of opinions running across the comments from new Councillors compared to those of the returning Councillors. In general, new Councillors found the most benefit from attending the non-mandatory induction sessions whilst returning Councillors felt there was limited benefit. In contrast, the new Councillors spoke about the positive contribution made by returning Members and felt they had added to the overall success of the sessions. There was clearly a range of presentation styles with some criticism of 'death by powerpoint' however there was overall praise for the Officers involved with presenting the sessions and acceptance that Councillor interaction would have an impact on each session.

3.12 Within the Democratic Services team we have reviewed formal and informal feedback from Councillors and Officers involved with the programme. The responses have been reassuringly positive although where there has been constructive criticism (such as missing information in the Welcome Pack or the timings of induction sessions) this will be used to make improvements in preparation for the induction in 2023. The Member Development Group has also received a summary of the induction feedback and has used this to shape their future work plans.

4 Member Development Group

4.1 In June 2018, the Governance and Audit Committee agreed to the formation of a Member Development Group. The aim of this group was initially to provide Member involvement in the Induction Programme following the 2019 all-out elections. With the conclusion of the induction period, the Member Development Group continues to help shape the programme of events over the coming months and years.

4.2 The first meeting of the Member Development Group was held on 5 September 2019. The updated Terms of Reference for the group were agreed and are attached at Appendix 3. The priorities for the group were agreed to be: preparing an improvement plan for alternative methods of delivery, widely agreed to be online training sessions; designing an induction process for those Councillors elected through a by-election; beginning preparation for the 2023 induction building on the recent experience of 2019.

- 4.3 The Member Development Group is available on modern.gov as a subscribable group for all Councillors. Agendas, papers and minutes are distributed via modern.gov in line with all committees. All Councillors are invited to subscribe to the group and offer comments and suggestions via members of the group or the Democratic Services Team.

5 Timeline

- 5.1 The Member Development Group will finalise their working timeline at the next meeting on 14 November 2019. This will be based on initial findings from the Democratic and Civic Officer regarding online training options and will also take into account any recommendations or requests from the Governance and Audit Committee.

- 5.2 The provisional time scales for each strand of the group's focus are:

5.2.1 Online Training

Research, testing and feedback to have been undertaken and completed prior to the end of this municipal year in readiness for a decision by the Governance and Audit Committee to be made as to whether the online options should be adopted. Assuming it is agreed to begin offering online training options, these would come into effect for the municipal year 2020/21.

5.2.2 By-Election Inductions

The group recognised that it would not be feasible to replicate the 2019 Induction Programme in its entirety for a single Member elected through a by-election. However it has long been acknowledged that those joining the Council outside of all-out elections have often received a limited induction. The timescale for producing a By-Election Induction Programme has not yet been fixed but it has been given priority by the group and should be established by the end of the 2019/20 municipal year. In the event of a by-election taking place prior to the completion of a By-Election Induction Programme, the Democratic Services Team will work with key Senior Officers and Councillors to ensure the newly elected Councillor is fully supported in their new role.

5.2.3 Induction Programme 2023

The group have identified improvement opportunities for the 2023 Induction Programme that would be best realised whilst the lessons learned from 2019 are still current for all involved. The proposed deadline for the completion of the draft Induction Programme is May 2022, in preparation for the Annual Report to the Governance and Audit Committee in June 2022 where suggestions and recommendations could still be included. The deadline for finalisation of the Induction Programme is proposed to be no later than January 2023.

- 5.3 A provisional timeline of development sessions proposed for the coming months and over the remainder of the four-year term is attached at Appendix 4.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Members are asked to:

6.1.1 Accept this report as an accurate reflection of Member Development over the past municipal year;

6.1.2 Approve the priorities as identified by the Member Development Group, those being: online training options, the induction process for Members elected through by-elections and initial work on the full 2023 Induction Programme;

6.1.3 Agree to receive a further report no later than April 2020 in which options for alternative methods of delivery (ie, online training options) will be detailed and approval sought for actions in the 2020/21 municipal year.